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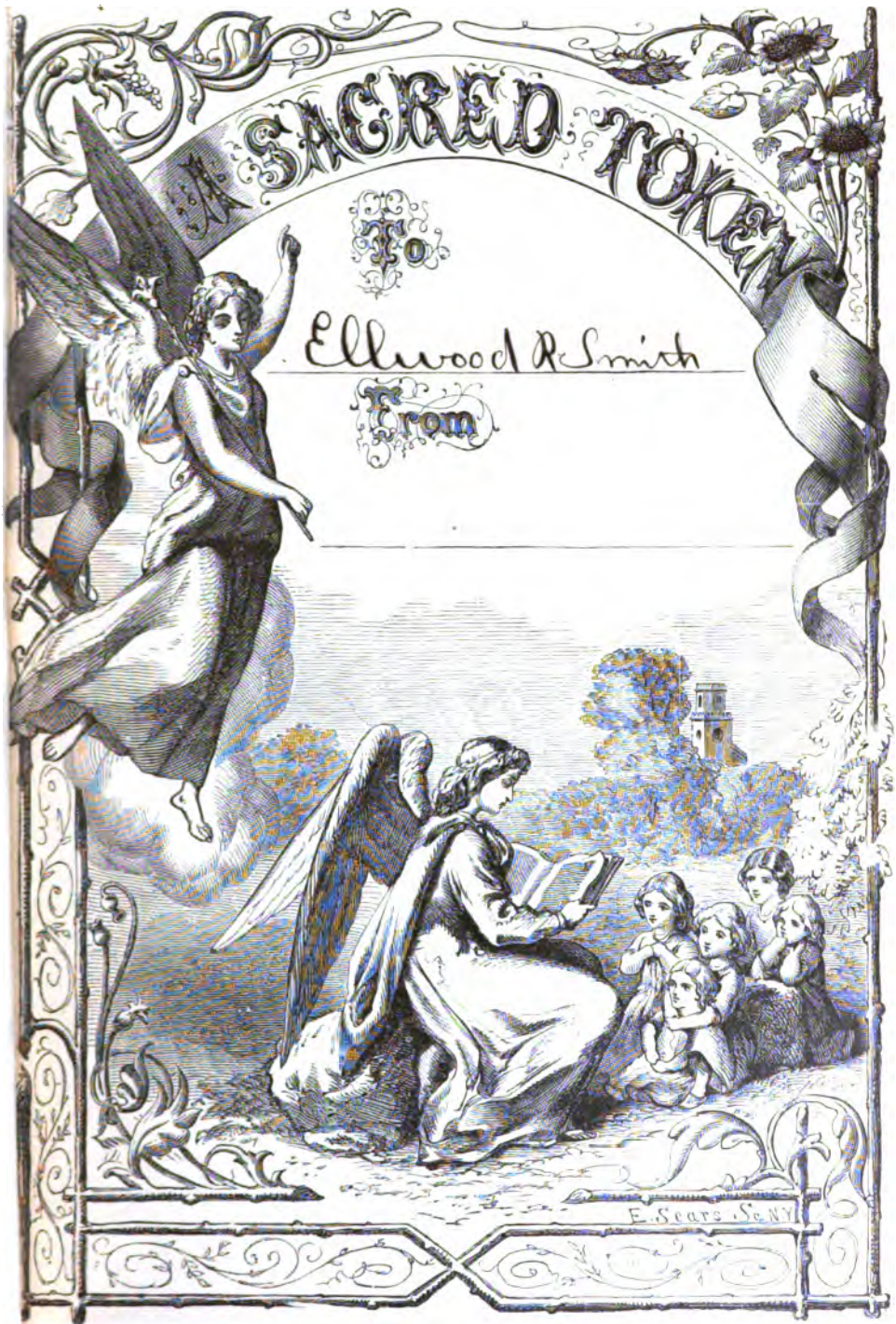


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YOUNG PEOPLE'S ILLUSTRATED BIBLE HISTORY:

A SIMPLE AND ATTRACTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE GREAT EVENTS

MENTIONED IN THE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

COMPREHENDING ALSO

THE LIVES OF THE PATRIARCHS,

OF

CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES,

AND OF THE

REMARKABLE WOMEN AND CHILDREN MENTIONED IN THE SACRED VOLUME.

EACH SECTION CLOSING WITH APPROPRIATE MORAL REFLECTIONS.

ALSO AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING INSTRUCTIVE TABLES AND OTHER VALUABLE MATTER.

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION BY THE AMERICAN EDITOR,

REV. ALVAN BOND, D.D.,

**ILLUSTRATED WITH NUMEROUS ELEGANT ENGRAVINGS BY THE MOST EMINENT
ARTISTS; ACCOMPANIED WITH FOUR ACCURATE**

MAPS OF THE COUNTRIES OF THE BIBLE.

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THE HENRY BILL PUBLISHING COMPANY,

1878.

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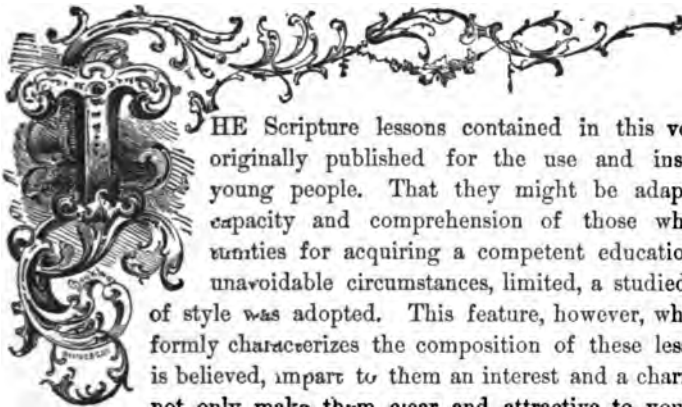
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INTRODUCTION.



THE Scripture lessons contained in this volume were originally published for the use and instruction of young people. That they might be adapted to the capacity and comprehension of those whose opportunities for acquiring a competent education were, by unavoidable circumstances, limited, a studied *simplicity* of style was adopted. This feature, however, which so uniformly characterizes the composition of these lessons will, it is believed, impart to them an interest and a charm, that will not only make them clear and attractive to young readers, but commend the book to the favor of Bible readers of mature years and liberal culture.

As an INTRODUCTION to the following collection of Scriptural Lessons, it is proposed to offer some REASONS, showing the superior claims of the Bible to the earnest attention, study, and belief of all classes, whether learned or unlearned, young or old; inasmuch as all are equally concerned in the momentous truths and teachings it reveals. The community is inundated with reading matter, journals, magazines, romances, histories, philosophies, &c., and the tendency is to neglect the Holy Word of God, as though its mission were ended, and the mighty themes, of which it treats, were obsolete. Whatever is done, therefore, to render Bible reading more attractive, and to revive an interest in the sublime truths of Divine Revelation, will be regarded with favor by all who believe in these truths, the knowledge of which surpasses in real importance all other kinds of knowledge.*

The BIBLE embraces a collection of books, written, as is claimed, by holy men, who were inspired of God. It includes both the Old and the New Testaments. The contents of this sacred Book come under a two-fold division,

* For a more extended exhibition of the reasons it is proposed to assign for the Divine Authority of the Bible, the reader is referred to a valuable English work,—“The Mine Explored,”—re-published by the “American Sunday-School Union;”—which work has suggested some of the salient points of the following argument.

viz. : Doctrinal and Historical. The work before us is confined principally to the latter division.

While the *doctrinal* portions of the Bible have received earnest thought and searching investigation on the part of theologians and scholars, the *historical* parts have been passed over with less attention than may be claimed for them on the ground of their important relation to the Church of God, to say nothing of their instructive and practical value. There is the same evidence that the Bible histories were selected and arranged under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as there is that the doctrinal and prophetic writings were so given. "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God.*"

From the testimony of Josephus it appears, that the public records of the Jews were kept by the priests and other persons who were appointed as depositaries of the same, and that the sacred writers occasionally refer to them, as containing testimony to the facts in their narratives, and a more minute detail of particulars, which they omit as unnecessary to their purpose. For example, see reference to "The Book of Jasher," Josh. x. 18; 2 Sam. i. 18, and to "The Book of the Wars of the Lord," Numb. xxi. 14.

"The object of the historical books was to communicate instruction to the chosen people, and to mankind in general; and to illustrate the nature of God's providence in small as well as in great occurrences, in particular instances as well as in general appointments; they therefore often descend from the great outline of national concerns to the minute detail of private life. The relations, however, of individual events, that are occasionally interspersed, are highly interesting, and admirably develop the designs of the Almighty, and the character of those times to which they are respectively assigned. Those seeming digressions likewise, in which the sacred writers have recorded such remarkable events as related to particular personages, or such occurrences in foreign countries as tended to affect the interests of the Hebrew nation, are not only valuable for the religious spirit which they breathe, but are to be admired as strictly consistent with the sacred plan." (See Introduction to Starkhouse's History, &c., Glasgow Ed., 1842.)

Among the various *reasons*, showing the claims of the Sacred Scriptures to our earnest attention and belief, the *first* place must be assigned to the *EVIDENCES* of their Divine authority. It is not proposed to go into an elaborate argument for their Divine authority, but simply to notice some obvious *facts*, on which the evidence of the inspiration and authority of the revealed Scriptures rest.

One fact, worthy of notice, is the wonderful *preservation* of the Sacred Writings amidst the changes and revolutions of ages. Portions of them were composed more than three thousand years ago. No other historical writings, known to us, are so old by a thousand years. The books of the Old Testament were in the exclusive possession of the Jews, so long as their independent nationality continued. But as the art of printing was unknown, comparatively few copies were in existence at any one time, and these were mostly deposited

in the tabernacle, temple, or synagogue. The later wars and domestic revolutions, suffered by the Jewish nation, involved to a great extent the destruction of their homes, their cities, their sanctuaries, and hundreds of thousands of lives; but their Holy Books were preserved amidst the common ruin. When Antiochus Epiphanes captured Jerusalem, he attempted to destroy every copy and fragment of the Jewish Scriptures. A few copies, however, escaped the ravages of the "Desolater," and were carried away by the captive Jews. During their long captivity in a heathen land, their forms of worship were interrupted and their national institutions destroyed; but the Providence of God watched over the Holy Scriptures and preserved them unharmed.

Another fact, bearing on the evidence that these Sacred Writings are of superhuman origin, is their being preserved *unaltered*. Other writings have been mutilated and changed from their original form. Not so the Bible. The Jews cherished such profound reverence for their Sacred Books, that the utmost care and pains were taken by copyists to avoid the slightest mistake or alteration in the copies they made. The omission or addition of a single letter, if discovered, would vitiate the manuscript, and cause it to be condemned. Some three hundred years before Christ the Old Testament was, by order of Ptolemy Philadelphus, an Egyptian king, translated from the Hebrew into Greek, on which work seventy scholars were employed. This ancient version, quoted often by the apostles, on being compared with the original, and also with our version as now received, is found to agree with the same in all important particulars. There have been collected from many quarters several hundred manuscripts, some of them written as early as the fourth century, one of the oldest being very recently discovered in the convent of Mount Sinai, all which, on being critically examined and compared, are found to agree with each other in all essential points, as it respects history and doctrine. Thus may the care of a protecting Providence be clearly recognized in the circumstances which have prevented all such changes in the text of the Scriptures, as would obscure, or render doubtful the original reading. While cotemporary works, embodying the productions of human wisdom and learning, have long since been irrecoverably lost, or so changed as to make them worthless, the Bible has been wonderfully preserved from loss, mutilation, or alteration, through thousands of years down to the present time. As another has said, "Cities fall, kingdoms come to nothing, empires fade away as the smoke. But that the Bible no tyrant should have been able to consume, no tradition to choke, no heretic maliciously to corrupt; that it should unto this day, amid the wreck of all that is human, without the alteration of one sentence, so as to change the doctrine taught therein; surely here is a very singular Providence, claiming our attention in a most remarkable manner." How true, that "the Word of the Lord endureth forever."

The evidence for the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures is confirmed by the fact of the *harmony* of their teachings and statements. It is known that they were written by many men, who lived in different provinces, and in differ-

ent ages. These men belonged to different classes, and possessed different degrees of culture. Among them were kings, prophets, legislators, priests, shepherds, publicans, fishermen, &c. That men who lived in lands so remote from each other, and in times between which centuries rolled, and under many forms of government, with various degrees of mental culture, should so harmonize with each other in their teachings and oracles, shows most conclusively, that they must have been guided by the unerring inspiration of the Holy Spirit. On no other ground can the fact be explained, that so many fallible men under such circumstances should have avoided all disagreements, and preserved such unity in their voluminous writings.

Another consideration bearing on this point is the peculiar *nature of the subjects* on which they wrote. These subjects related to the existence, character, and government of God; the creation of the world, the origin, nature, duty, fall, and destiny of man; the two dispensations of religion, the Mosaic and the Christian,—subjects unlike any recognized in human history or philosophy; and yet the sacred writers, living under different dispensations and civilizations, have evinced a unity of spirit and purpose,—a harmony in their teachings and revelations,—forming a system of heavenly truth which challenges the homage and faith of mankind. Such a fact as this can be satisfactorily explained on no other principle than the presence and agency of a supernatural inspiration. Greek and Roman philosophers in times of classic civilization and art abounded in contradictions, inconsistencies, and absurdities, in treating subjects of morality and religion. “The world by wisdom knew not God.” On the other hand, the sacred writers, both in the Old and New Testaments, have shown that they were moved and guided by one Spirit, and in the consistency and drift of their teachings have commended themselves to the confidence and admiration of the wise and good of all ages.

The Divine origin of the Scriptures becomes evident from the *characteristics* which distinguish them from all human writings. One of these characteristics is uncompromising *truthfulness*. The candid reader of the Bible cannot but be impressed with the conviction, that the sacred historians aimed to give a true and impartial record of the events and transactions which occurred in their times and in their nation. In no instance did they betray such partiality for their own people, as to prevent their telling the whole truth respecting their conduct. The corruptions and the evils of the times were exposed with a fidelity to history as candid and truthful as it was bold and faithful. The lives and conduct of patriarchs, priests, rulers, and other classes of people, were exhibited in the light of truth and fact, however humiliating to national pride and reputation. Their own personal faults were mentioned without attempts at concealment or palliation. The sins and errors of Abraham, of Jacob, of Moses, of David, of Solomon, of Peter, are faithfully narrated. In view of facts, which so distinguish the sacred writers from all other historians, we must infer that they wrote under the influence of a very different inspiration from that which has inspired the muse of profane history.

The spirit of *love* pervades the sacred writings as a prominent element. The sacred writers ever showed themselves to be unselfish, unambitious men, whose aim was to do good to others. In pursuance of this generous purpose they made great sacrifices, they endured persecutions, trials, privations, and labors; and in some instances they showed a heroic devotion to the good of their fellow-men that was ready to die for them. Moses, for example, exiled himself from the privileges, pleasures and honors of the court of Egypt, for the sake of espousing the cause of an oppressed people. For them he labored and prayed, and by his intensely earnest intercessions he was instrumental in averting from them the menacing judgments of an offended God. He was willing to be blotted out of the book of God, if this were necessary to the salvation of the people whose cause he had espoused. We find in Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, men of the same stamp—men in whose bosoms love for their people glowed with undying ardor. The same was true of the apostles. Paul was so intensely desirous of the salvation of his brethren after the flesh, that he would consent to be accursed from Christ, if this might be the means of saving them from their impending doom. With the like spirit the apostle John says, "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." In these examples do we not perceive the working of a more than earthly love? Such love pervades the Bible, and shows that the men, in whose lives and actions such a spirit runs, were influenced by unearthly aims, divine impulses.

The God of the Bible, unlike the deities revealed by man's wisdom, is represented as being LOVE itself. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God so loved the world. It was a love different from, and superior to, that general benevolence witnessed in the gifts of Providence. It was a *sacrificing* love, influenced by which he gave his Son to labor, and to suffer, and die for guilty man. This sublime idea could never have possessed the mind, save as it was revealed by a Divine inspiration. And in the life of the only-begotten Son we have a wonderful manifestation of love, love unparalleled in nature and degree. Impelled by it he endured the cross. While we were sinners Christ died for us. The revelation of such love must be traced to a higher source than the wisdom of this world. It carries with it the evidence of a Divine original. Such love as is revealed in the lives and teachings of the holy men of the Bible,—such love as that predicated of God, and witnessed in the life of Jesus, forming as it does a pervading element of the Sacred Scriptures, proves these Scriptures to be Divine in their origin.

Another characteristic of Bible instruction is *holiness*. This element, as a distinguishing feature, pervades the laws, precepts, exhortations, psalms, doctrines, and prophecies of the Bible. And when God is introduced as the object of love and worship, he is invested with an atmosphere of holiness. "Worship at his holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy." The things prohibited, and the duties required, show that the pages of the Sacred Word are luminous with the pure light of holiness. It is this peculiarity that makes the Bible an

object of aversion with wicked men. They hate the light of sacred truth, and will not come to it, because it exposes their deeds of evil. This feature imparts to it a majesty and force which distinguish it from all other books, and strengthen the argument for its Divine inspiration.

A fact peculiar to the Scriptures is the supreme regard they express for the *honor and glory of God*. They breathe a spirit of reverential piety that exalts Jehovah, as the object of supreme love, loyalty, and praise. The men of God, such men as Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Paul, John, and Peter, disclaim all credit for their works of faith and labors of love, ascribing all to God. Their devout acknowledgment is,—“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.” Very different is the spirit that pervades the views of men in general. They praise themselves for what they think is praise-worthy. And they glorify their fellow-men for such deeds of heroism, for such achievements and enterprises, as tend to inspire popular admiration. Historians, poets, eulogists, limit their utterances to human instrumentalities and agencies, when speaking of the signal deeds of illustrious men. God and Providence are ignored. How very different the spirit that pervades the Sacred Writings. In them, whatever is great, and laudable, and noble, is ascribed to God. Jesus prayed,—“Father, glorify thy name.” The same spirit is exhibited in the teachings of the sacred writers, a fact which shows that they spake and wrote as moved by the Holy Ghost.

The characteristics thus enumerated, as distinguishing the writings of the Bible, show most conclusively that it is the WORD OF GOD. Take the one sublime statement with which the teachings of the Bible are introduced,—“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Here is recognized the *unity* of the Godhead, and this theology is with marvelous consistency carried along through all the writings of the Old Testament. Living, as the sacred writers did, amidst the surroundings of polytheism, they strenuously and persistently maintained the great cardinal truth, that the Lord Jehovah, the Creator of the world, was one God. How can such a fact be accounted for except on the ground that these holy men, patriarchs, prophets, and psalmists, were guided in their sublime utterances from age to age by a supernatural influence, which led them into the truth.

Let us pass on to another source of evidence for the Divine authority of the Bible, viz : *the prophetic writings*. No one will claim that mere human foresight can look down the ages, and tell of events of which there is no visible sign. But there are found scattered through the Scriptures from Moses to Malachi, predictions of signal events a long time before their fulfilment. New and increasing evidences of the truthfulness of these eminent prophecies are furnished by modern researches among the ruins of buried cities, whose destruction was foretold long before it took place.

The splendid capital of the Assyrian Empire, Nineveh, must have seemed as though it might resist every hostile assault, and flourish for ages, at the time when Nahum and Zephaniah predicted its destruction,—the one 645, and the

other 680 years B. C. These predictions specified details, circumstances, and agencies, in connection with which its overthrow would be effected. Improbable as these predictions must have appeared when uttered, they received literal fulfilment about 606 years B. C. The city was then laid waste, its noble monuments overthrown, and its inhabitants dispersed and carried into captivity. The ruins, which have been discovered by modern explorations, and which attest the magnificence of this ancient city, furnish historic illustration and confirmation of the ancient prophecies, and prove that they must have been *revealed* to the men by whom they were uttered. A heathen historian, who must have been ignorant of the Hebrew Scriptures, has given a narrative of the destruction of this great city, comprising all that was foretold.

Babylon was once the glory of kingdoms,—the proud metropolis of the world; it was so when its doom was announced by Isaiah and Jeremiah. In the predictions uttered, the nations are specified by whom the city would be besieged and conquered, and the name of the conqueror was given, a hundred years before he was born, and the circumstances are noted that would accompany its overthrow. Improbable as the prophetic utterances seemed at first, as the course of time swept on, the things spoken by the prophets came to pass. Subsequent history has confirmed their truthfulness, and the ruins of this mighty kingdom, as brought to light by modern antiquarians, add unanswerable testimony to the evidence, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

The doom of Tyre, the extermination of the Edomites, the desolation of Egypt, and especially the singular fortunes of the Hebrew nation,—as foretold by different prophets, attest the divinity of the prophetic writings, and strengthen the general argument for the supernatural origin of the entire Bible. The facts contained in the history of the Jews, as developed through a long course of ages, show in a most conclusive manner, that the spirit of prophecy pervades, and gives authority to the sacred writings. The growth of this people from a very humble origin, their peculiar nationality, their deliverance from Egyptian oppression, their possession of the land of Canaan, their institutions, their civil wars, their captivity, their restoration, their subjugation to Roman dominion, and their final destruction as a nation, and more than all, their continued existence as an isolated race, show with singular particularity the truthfulness of the many predictions uttered by Moses and other prophets respecting them, making their historic record of unparalleled vicissitudes a standing monument, like a lone pillar in the desert, attesting the Divine authority of the Bible.

The prophecies cited in the foregoing remarks, form only a small part of what are contained in the Scriptures. As a whole, they constituted an anticipative history of the world, so far as such history stood related to the church. They have been in a continued course of fulfilment during successive generations to the present time. Whence, we may inquire, this accurate foresight of future events? Not from the foreseeing wisdom of men, for they know not

what shall be on the morrow. We infer, therefore, that it could only have been possessed as a special gift from the omniscient God. Hence the Bible, which contains a record of these prophetic visions, must be a Divine book—the Word of God.

The argument for this conclusion is fortified by the *moral influence* of the Scriptures. From the past, as well as the present history of the world, the fact cannot be questioned, that Bible knowledge has exerted a marked influence for good on the governments, laws, civilizations, institutions, and social condition of states and communities, and on the character of individuals.

History shows, that where there has been no Divine revelation, and consequently no clear knowledge of the only true God, governments have been established and laws enacted with a view, not to the good of subjects, but to the enthronement in seats of power of selfish, ambitious, unscrupulous rulers. The reign of oppression has been absolute and grinding wherever the Bible has been unknown. The old civilizations of the world, such as existed in Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, though under them arts and architecture flourished, and classic literature attained a high degree of refinement, yet, so far as the masses of the people were concerned, ignorance, superstition, corruption, oppression, and misery, characterized the state of society. The iron heel of despotic rule everywhere crushed out the life of struggling manhood. Men, stripped of their rights, were treated as of small account, except as instruments to be used to subserve the purposes and pleasures of a few irresponsible and remorseless potentates.

In the absence of the elevating influences of the Word of God, the general course and drift of the people is in the direction of a debasing idolatry. There the social condition is marked by vices, corruptions, and cruelties of the grossest forms. No civilization that has lacked the moulding influence of Divine revelation, has ever possessed power to reform the habits of idolatry, to enlighten the ignorant masses, or to elevate a people to the sphere of knowledge and virtue. "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

An entirely different phase of society is assumed where government, law, institutions, and religion, are brought into contact with the formative,—the regenerating influences of the Holy Scriptures. Nowhere else, however sunny the skies, or luxuriant the earth, or healthful the clime, does the moral landscape refresh the sight with growths of living virtue, and scenes of attractive beauty. Nowhere else does government recognize the inalienable rights of the people, or protect them. Nowhere else is the light of popular education diffused. Nowhere else are there found the noble institutions of philanthropy and benevolence. Nowhere else is the fundamental relation of marriage rightly understood and sacredly guarded. Nowhere else do temples and altars rise for the worship of the true and living God. Such results never flow from the sources of this world's boasted wisdom.

The late Dr. Wayland, as the result of wide observation and profound reflection, has expressed his views as follows: "That the truths of the Bible have the

power of awakening an intense moral feeling in man under every variety of character, learned or ignorant, civilized or savage; that they make bad men good, and send a pulse of healthful feeling throughout all the domestic, civil, and social relations; that they teach men to love right, to hate wrong, and to seek each other's welfare as the children of one common Parent; that they control the baleful passions of the human heart, and thus make men proficient in the science of self-government; and finally, that they teach him to aspire after a conformity to a Being of infinite holiness, and fill him with hopes infinitely more purifying, more exalted, more suited to his nature, than any other which this world has ever known, are facts as incontrovertible as the laws of philosophy or demonstrations in mathematica." No such moral forces ever proceeded from the teachings of man's wisdom. The lessons of heathen sages never wrought any thorough or permanent reform in the lives of individuals, or in the state of society. What human talent, culture, learning, and philosophy, have failed to accomplish, has been successfully achieved by the Word of God. In facts like these, facts patent to all candid observers, we find proof that the Bible is from heaven.

The like conviction will flash upon the mind from a careful study of the *adaptation* of Scriptural instruction to the capacities, necessities, and conscious cravings of men of all races. God possessed a perfect knowledge of the wants of our fallen race when he revealed to them his Word. Hence we find the truths and teachings of the Bible, whether doctrinal, historical, prophetic, devotional, or moral, peculiarly adapted to the wants of men in making them wiser and better for this life, and fitting them for the higher life of the world to come. This Holy Book is equally adapted to meet the wants of mankind in whatever times, countries, or conditions they have existed. Such adaptiveness is beautifully illustrated and signally manifested, when its hallowed lessons come to the soul in the trying emergencies of life, and especially in that eventful, solemn crisis, when man finds himself trembling on the margin of that unknown futurity, concerning which the oracle of uninspired reason reveals no gleam of light, offers no relief, no peace. Then its precious worth is realized. "If there is one great thing in this world," as another has said, "it is the BIBLE of God—great in origin, great in thought, great in promise, great in beauty, great in its results! It hangs as by a golden cord from the throne of the *Highest*, and all heaven's light, life, love, and sweetness, come down into it for us. It hangs there like a celestial harp; the daughters of sorrow tune it, and awake a strain of consolation. The hand of joy strikes it, and feels a divine note of gladness. The sinner comes to it, and it discourses to him of repentance and salvation. The saint bends an ear to it, and it talks to him of an Intercessor and an immortal kingdom. The dying man lays his trembling hand on it, and there steals thence into his soul the promise,—'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned.' 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' 'The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.' Where is promise, where is philosophy, where is song, like this?"

The foregoing pages contain a condensed argument for the Divine authority of the Sacred Scriptures. A more elaborate and scientific statement of this argument would not comport with the design of this introductory article. Enough has been said, however, to show their superiority over any other books ever written. Such superiority becomes evident from the nature and importance of the KNOWLEDGE of which the Bible is the only authentic source.

The history contained in this Sacred Book, is more valuable than that found in any uninspired writings. It is not claimed that Bible history is a substitute for the general history of the world. It is more specially a *history of the kingdom of God on earth*. Other peoples and nations are referred to only, as they were in some way connected with that kingdom. And yet it is true, that the book of Genesis is the ground of all the authentic history in existence from the epoch of creation to the death of Joseph, a period of about 2369 years. The Pentateuch as a history covers a period of about 2553 years, down to the death of Moses. No other record furnishes any reliable account of the creation of the world, the creation of man, the apostacy, the state of the human race before the deluge, 1656 years, the origin of nations in the 10th chapter of Genesis, the lives and fortunes of the early patriarchs, the sojourn of the Hebrews in Egypt, their exodus, the giving of the law, and the conquest of Canaan. There are twelve other books principally historical, which record events as connected with the Church of God to the time of the return of the Jews from the captivity. It is not supposed that the Bible chronicles contain a record of all the important events that transpired during these ages, but only such a selection as the Holy Spirit should suggest to the sacred historians. In this selection from existing documents, as well as what was revealed directly, special reference was had to what might be important for the use of the church in all subsequent ages.

There are other departments of knowledge which show the great superiority of Bible truth as a source of instruction. On those great and profoundly interesting subjects,—the existence and character of God, the origin, character, duties, and destinies of man, the future state, the plan of salvation through a Redeemer,—on these and many other subjects connected with them, there is no source of reliable knowledge outside of the Bible. Without the light and truth which come to us from this Holy Book,—without its histories, its teachings, its precepts, its prophecies, its psalms, its gospels and epistles—how dark and gloomy were the condition of man from the cradle to the grave. Without God in the world, as revealed in the Bible, he would have no hope, no faith, no source of peace. The earth might revolve, as now, and seasons come and go with their stores and sources of temporal good, with alternating phases of sternness and beauty. The mountains also might tower upward in rugged grandeur, the rivers flow onward between smiling banks, the seas roar and lift up their waves in stormy sublimity, but what would man care for these exhibitions of wisdom, power, and loveliness, deaf as he would be to their utterances, while ignorant of what the Holy Word reveals! What motive were there to

worship at the altar of "the unknown God," or seek information about the unknown future by consulting the dumb oracle of uninspired reason? Why should not man, thus groping in the region and shadow of death, limit his aims and labors to what shall minister merely to present gratification, accepting as his creed the frigid philosophy of the atheistic stoic,—“Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die.”

As darkness brooded over the chaotic abyss at one stage of the creative process, till “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,” commanding the light to shine, kindling life and beauty, so the world of intelligent man were but a moral chaos, enveloped in thick darkness, unless the Spirit’s presence should cause light to shine through the revelations of the Bible. The darkness would prevail till God said, “Let there be light.”

Pluck the sun from the heavens, and what would be the effect? The stars might remain, but how poor a substitute would they be for the lost sun! Under their cold, twinkling radiance, what could live and flourish! The world might stand as now, but clad in perpetual darkness, save as relieved by star-light, deprived of the heat of the orb of day, how soon would its fields of verdure, and forms of beauty, and growths of fruit and vegetation fade, and wither, and freeze, and perish! A result analogous to this would follow, were the Bible, the sun in the moral heavens, with all the light of which it has been, and is still the fountain, destroyed. Who can conceive the desolation that would follow! The dial of human progress would, like that of Ahas, reverse its shadow, and the world would soon be thrown back into the rayless gloom of heathenism, barbarism, and universal corruption. The ruins of those beautiful creations, to which the Bible more than any other agency has contributed, might remain, but the glory of the moral world with its growing civilizations, its humane achievements, its noble institutions of learning and religion, would soon disappear forever.

The authority of the Bible, as an inspired book, which differs from all other books, finds support in the great and leading *purpose* which it reveals, viz.: **THE REDEMPTION OF MAN.** It was no part in the design of God to make his word of truth a manual of science, or the source of such knowledge as can be acquired by observation and study. A higher end was embraced in his plan—the *establishment of a kingdom in the world*—the subjects of which should be redeemed from the ruins of the fall, and be “purified unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” The materials incorporated into this great spiritual organization, were not to be selected from any one people, or from any one age. All kindreds and peoples, and all times, were included in the comprehensive plan of Divine wisdom and benevolence revealed in the Bible.

The progressive development of God’s redeeming plan on to its consummation, furnishes a sublime historic exhibition of the wisdom and power which underlie it. In this respect it differs radically from all the plans of human improvement and elevation ever devised by reformers, philosophers,

INTRODUCTION.

or statesmen. It rises majestically, a tower of hope for a world lying in wickedness.

The Old Testament, by its altars, types, personages, histories, prophecies, and peculiar institutions, pointed to the one great crowning event, which, "in the fullness of time," was realized in the mission of the incarnate Son of God, as the Saviour of men. It is this momentous truth that lends to the Old Testament such significance, value, and glory. It was all along the ages a foreshadowing of his coming, who was to be a Mediator between God and alienated man.

As the great Teacher, the atoning Mediator, the regal Head over all things to the Church, Jesus Christ is the *Divine, the Central Object* of Bible revelations, in which truth and prophecy meet, and find a marvelous fulfilment. From him they derive light and power, and by him they are clothed with authority that claims the reverence and faith of all men. The Bible is, emphatically, "the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation." It gives light where all human teachings leave the inquiring mind in darkness; it inspires peace of conscience and relief of soul, where all other teachings only perplex and confuse; it is a well-spring of refreshing hope and comfort, where all mere human writings prove dry and barren. A pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, it shows the way to heaven.

The teachings of the Bible are not only so profound as to command the attention of the mightiest intellect, and awaken earnest inquiry in men of the highest culture, but they are so plain and simple as to be adapted to the humblest capacity. The least and the lowest of the human family may find in the Bible what is suited to their understanding. Matchless wisdom and pure simplicity, so wonderfully united in its teachings, show that it is a book for all mankind, for the humblest peasant and the profoundest student. "This supreme and mighty Book," says another,—"the *Book of mankind*—finds no domain inaccessible to it, and no fragment of the human race for which it has not a vitalizing power."

In these respects how greatly does the Bible differ from all mere human compositions, whether philosophies, sciences, theologies, histories, or codes of law. These are constructed with reference to the concerns of the present life, revolutions, reforms, political changes, and social improvements. They have their day of popularity and influence, and then are consigned to dumb forgetfulness, never more to be revived. Such is the common fate of the productions of the human intellect. Very few of them outlive the generation when they had their birth. However brilliant or popular for a time, they pass away as a dream, while the Bible lives on unchanged and imperishable, more and more read, believed in, and loved. What better witness do we need that it is Divine?

The Bible is sufficient to instruct and comfort men of the loftiest intellect and highest culture, and is no less adapted to the younger classes of society. It has taught the little ones of the Christian household more about God, and heaven, the origin, the duty, and the destiny of man, than the wisest sages ever

knew. Jewish parents were required to store the minds and memories of their children with Scripture truths. Jesus in his childhood had become so well acquainted with the Scriptures, that he could converse about them with the Doctors in the temple.

In an age like the present, when error and delusion, in fascinating forms, imperil the principles and morals of the young, the greatest safeguard for their protection is a knowledge of God's Holy Word. Its sacred histories are replete with attractive and startling lessons of truth and warning easily understood; and as a preparation for a knowledge of preceptive and doctrinal theology, they hold an important place. The simplicity and clearness of these lessons, recommend them especially as aids to that religious culture, to which the young mind and heart should be subjected. To answer this important purpose the work, here introduced, was originally prepared, and seems admirably fitted. The estimate in which it is held in the country where it was first published, appears from the fact, that successive editions have been demanded.

As an introductory article, it has been thought, that its value would be enhanced by exhibiting in a simple manner some of the more obvious and conclusive evidences, which may be adduced in vindication of the claims of the Bible to the faith, the study, and the reverence, not only of those who move in the higher sphere of life, but of those also who dwell on lower ground—the masses, many of whom are but children in religious knowledge. To instruct, interest, and benefit this numerous class of readers, as children and youth, this work, it is believed, possesses a special adaptedness.

With these convictions, this humble service is commended to the blessing of Him, whose Holy Word not only giveth light, but maketh wise unto salvation.

ALVAN BOND.

NORWICH, CONN.

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YOUNG PEOPLE'S
ILLUSTRATED
BIBLE HISTORY.

OLD TESTAMENT.

I

THE CREATION.



ANY years ago, there was no earth, nor plants, nor animals, nor sun, nor moon, nor people. All was darkness; but God was. God is eternal; He had no beginning, He will have no end.

God spoke, and created all things by his wonderful power. The first day, He created light: the second day, the blue sky; the third day, the seas and dry land, and trees; the fourth day, the sun, and moon, and stars; the fifth day, the birds and fishes; the sixth day, beasts, and insects, and creeping things, and man. Then all was finished, and "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." "The seventh day God ended His work which He had made." God rested on that day, and therefore He commands us to rest on the Sabbath day. He says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." God gave to the animals beautiful and useful bodies; but

to man He gave more: He gave him a soul also, which could never die. God gave wonderful instinct to the animals; but He gave reason to man, power to know and to love, and to worship God. The man's name was Adam. God created him holy and happy. "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man." The garden was full of beautiful trees and flowers; the little birds sang sweetly, and the animals all played together upon the green grass; they did not fight, nor hurt one another; all was love and happiness, because there was no sin. It was warm and pleasant, there was no cold wind, no snow, no winter.

"The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it." But God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." When Adam was asleep, God took a rib out of his side, and made it a woman, and brought her to Adam, and she was his wife. Her name was Eve. She had a soul and reason like Adam, and was holy and

happy as he was. God said to them, "Of every tree in the garden ye may eat; but of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which is in the midst of the garden, ye shall not eat, lest ye die."

Adam and Eve loved one another,

and they loved God. They walked in the beautiful garden, and sang praise to God, without pain, or sorrow, or fear; and they loved to hear God speak to them, and to learn the wonderful things He taught them.

II.

THE BEGINNING OF SIN.

HERE was a wicked angel of old, named Satan. Once he had been a bright and happy angel in heaven; but he was disobedient and God drove him out of heaven, and many other wicked angels with him. Sin cannot be in heaven; all must be holy there. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down into hell." *2 Pet. ii. 4.*

Satan hated Adam and Eve, because they were holy and happy, and he was wicked and miserable; and he went into the garden, and appeared like a serpent, and spoke to Eve, and tempted her to eat the fruit which God had forbidden. But Eve said, "God commanded us, saying, Ye shall not eat of it, lest ye die." Then Satan told a lie, for "he is a liar, and the father of it," *John viii. 44.* and said, "You shall not surely die." And Eve was tempted to believe Satan, and she took the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and ate, and gave to Adam, and he ate. God saw all this, and He was very angry. Adam and Eve were sinners now, their holiness and happiness were gone, and God would punish them for their sin. "They heard the

voice of the Lord God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves." Why did they fear? Because they knew they had sinned; they knew that God was angry with them: they were not glad now to hear His voice; they could not now sing His praises, and talk happily to Him. But Adam and Eve could not hide themselves from God, for He can see everywhere. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." *Prov. xv. 3.*

God called Adam, and said to him, "Hast thou eaten of the fruit of which I commanded thee not to eat?" and Adam did not humbly confess his sin, but answered, "The woman gave it to me, and I ate." Then God said to Eve, "What is this that thou hast done?" and she answered, "The serpent tempted me, and I ate." Then God told Adam and Eve that they had sinned, and therefore they must die. Thorns and thistles would now grow in the beautiful world; they must labor, and suffer pain and sorrow all the days they lived, and then "die, and return to the dust." Their bodies must die; but where

must their souls go? *They* could not die, because they were immortal: and they could not go to heaven, because they were sinful. Heaven is holy; "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." Must the souls of Adam and Eve, and all their children, be lost? No—God did not wish his sinful creatures to perish. He said, "Deliver their souls from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom." *Job xxxiii. 24.*

God said, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. What did this mean? Satan was the serpent; Jesus Christ was the Seed of the woman. In due time, Jesus would come into the world, and subdue Satan, and deliver all who should believe, from Satan's power, from sin and death. If we, like Adam and Eve, have faith in Jesus, we shall be saved as they were, and made eternally happy when we die.

III.

CAIN AND ABEL.

BUT though God forgave Adam and Eve, He would not let them remain in the garden. An angel came with a flaming sword to drive them away. They were sinners, and therefore they must not stay there. Now, they felt pain and sorrow; and when their children were born, they were sinful children.

Cain, the eldest son of Adam and Eve, was very wicked; but his brother Abel loved and prayed to God, and believed in Jesus. Abel was a shepherd: and, at God's command, he took a lamb, and killed it, and offered it up in sacrifice. Abel sacrificed the lamb in faith, and in obedience: Cain offered a sacrifice too, but not the right sort of sacrifice, and not in the right way. He brought the fruits of the earth, and gave them to God. But he did not confess his sins, nor ask for forgiveness; so God accepted Abel, and his sacrifice; but Cain, and his sacrifice, He did not accept.

But when Cain knew God was angry, he did not ask God to forgive him, and change his heart; he was sullen and jealous, because God accepted his brother, and did not accept him. God said to Cain, "Why art thou angry? If thou doest well, shalt thou not also be accepted?" for God was willing to forgive Cain. But Cain would not attend to what God said; Satan was in his heart, tempting him to be angry and passionate, and Cain did not "resist the devil."

One day, Cain and Abel were together in the field. They were alone; Adam and Eve were not there; and Cain struck Abel, and killed him. Abel's body fell dead upon the ground; but his soul did not die; Cain could not hurt *that*: it went to heaven, to be there in happiness for ever. God saw Cain kill his brother, and asked, "Where is Abel?" and wicked Cain committed another sin, and told a lie, and said, "I know not." But God

had seen Abel die, and He punished Cain, and drove him away, far from his father, and mother, and brothers, and sisters; and he was a wanderer in the earth.

Adam and Eve were very sorry for their dear son. When they looked on his dead body, they must have thought of their own sin, and

of the punishment of sin: and how glad they must have been to remember God's promise, that Jesus should come and die to save sinners. They lived to be hundreds of years old, and then they died. Their bodies were buried in the tomb; but we may hope that their souls went to heaven.

IV.

THE DELUGE.



ANY people were in the world, and most of them were very wicked; but a holy man was among them, named Enoch. The Bible says, "Enoch walked with God;" what does this mean? It means that Enoch's sins were pardoned, and that he was at peace with God, and that he loved and served Him. God blessed Enoch, and was pleased to take him to heaven without dying. "He was not, for God took him."

"God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth." And He said, He would destroy the wicked people, and send a flood of water to wash them all away. But there was then another holy man, named Noah, and God promised to save him. God commanded Noah to make a great ark of wood. Noah did as God told him, and when the ark was finished, he went in, with his wife, and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and the wives of his sons, and many beasts and birds, and creeping things; and "the Lord shut him in." The wicked people would not go into the ark,

nor believe Noah when he told them that the water was soon coming to drown them all. God waited in mercy many years; for He did not wish them to perish. But they would not repent, nor believe, nor turn to God; and, at last, He sent rain from heaven, and water out of the sea, and washed away the wicked people. "The rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights," and every thing in the earth died. Was Noah safe? Yes: the ark floated upon the waters; it did not sink, because God kept it up. God will keep safely all who, like Noah, love and serve Him. He can keep them in every place. When they are asleep in the dark night, God sees them; when they walk about, He is with them; when they are in storms upon the great sea, He can keep them. He sends His holy angels to take care of them; His eye is always upon them. Those are happy people who have God near, to love and keep them wherever they are. And the ark may remind us of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are in Him, by faith, then we shall be safe for ever from God's

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THE DELUGE.

anger, as Noah was safe in the ark from the waters of the flood.

When the rain was over, the ark rested upon a mountain, called Ararat, and Noah looked out. All the ground was covered with water. There were no trees, nor flowers; they were withered and dead. There were no people, nor beasts, nor birds; the water had drowned them all. Then Noah opened a window in the ark, and sent out a raven. The raven flew about, and did not return to Noah. Then Noah sent out a dove. But the dove was not like the raven; it would not feed upon the dead bodies, and there was no resting-place for it; so it flew back again, and Noah put out his hand and pulled it into the ark. Seven days after, Noah sent out the dove again; and in the evening it returned, and brought in its beak an olive leaf. Noah was very glad to see this leaf; because he knew by it that now the trees were beginning to bud and grow, and that soon all would be dry and pleasant again. So Noah thanked God, and waited patiently for seven more days; and then he sent out the dove again. All was dry now. The trees and flowers grew, and the sun shone brightly and pleasantly. The dove did not return any more to the ark. God gave it instinct to build its nest among the trees, and to find food for itself without Noah to take care of it.

Noah took the covering off the ark, and looked, and he saw that all was dry. Then God told him to come out, with his family, and all the living things that were with him. They were glad to see the dry ground again, and the sun, and

trees, and flowers, so beautiful and fresh. They were all well; for God had kept them safely in the ark from the wind and the waters. Then Noah and his family thanked God, and built an altar, and offered joyful sacrifices in faith, and prayed, and praised the Lord.

And God set a beautiful rainbow in the sky, and he told Noah, that when it should rain again upon the earth, and the clouds should be black and heavy, then the rainbow should be seen in the cloud, that people might know that God would not again drown the world. The sun shining upon the little drops of water in the rain-cloud, makes the bow, and its beautiful colors; God sends the rain, and the cloud, and the sunshine to make the bow, that we may remember his promise to Noah, 'never to drown the world again. But God sends rain from heaven, to make the grass and corn grow; to water the ground, and make the trees and flowers bud and blossom. God is very good and kind. "He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains; He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." *Ps. cxlvii. 8, 9.*

When Noah and his family came out of the ark, they went into different places, and built cities and houses; and they had many children, and the earth was soon full of people again. These people all spoke the same language. Many of them were very wicked. They sought to make themselves great, not to please God; and, in their pride, they said, "Let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us

make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad." But God was angry with them, because they were proud, and forgot Him. And He confounded their speech, and made them speak different languages; so that they could not understand one another,

nor finish the city and tower. The place was named Babel, or confusion, and the wicked people were scattered abroad upon the face of the earth. See how God hates and punishes pride!

V.

A B R A M .



HERE was a man named Abram, who lived in Mesopotomia. The people there were idolators, but Abram worshipped God. God told Abram to go away from his home, into the land of Canaan; and He promised to bless him, if he did so. Abram obeyed directly; he took his wife, and his nephew Lot, and all he possessed, and went to Canaan. This showed his faith and obedience; and God did as He promised, and brought Abram safely to Sichem, and then said to him, "Unto thy seed will I give this land." Abram then had no children; but still he believed God, and "built an altar to the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord."

Abram was very rich: he had silver, and gold, and asses, and camels, and servants. His nephew Lot was rich too, and there was not room in the land for the possessions of both Lot and Abram; and their servants were unkind, and quarreled with one another. Abram did not like to see this, for he wished all to be love and peace. So he asked Lot to separate from him, and to go to the place he liked best. Then Lot looked towards Jordan; it was a beautiful place, like a sweet

garden, and full of water. So Lot chose to go to Sodom; because it was very pleasant, and there would be much food there for him, and for his cattle. Lot was very selfish; for he did not try to please Abram, he only tried to please himself. Let us always try to remember, that the Bible tells us to love others as well as ourselves.

Abram and Lot parted, and Lot went to live in Sodom. But Lot was not happy there. The people were very wicked, and he was vexed, because they would not love and worship God, as he wished to do. And now Lot was punished for his sin in going among wicked people, and choosing a home in a place where God was not obeyed. We should try to be with those who love the Lord, and who will help us to do right. Riches and possessions can not make us happy; the love of God alone can give us peace and comfort. And therefore Abram was happier than Lot was, in the rich city of Sodom. And God blessed Abram, and said to him again, "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy children." Then Abram went to Hebron, and dwelt there, and built an altar to the Lord.

VI.

MELCHIZEDEK.

SOON after Lot went to live in Sodom, a great king named Chedorlaomer, and other kings with him, came, and fought against the city and the people of Sodom. Chedorlaomer conquered the king of Sodom, and took away all the riches of the city, and made many of the people prisoners, and Lot was made prisoner among them. See how vain and foolish it is to love and trust in riches and worldly things! Lot went to Sodom, hoping to enjoy all his great possessions: now, he had lost everything, and was made prisoner himself.

When Abram heard what had happened to Lot, he armed himself, and his servants, and pursued the army of Chedorlaomer, and smote them, and brought all the people and goods that Chedorlaomer had taken, and delivered Lot; and Lot returned in safety to Sodom. The king of Sodom offered to give great riches to Abram; but Abram would not take any reward; for he wished only to show kindness to others, not to enrich himself. Let us try to imitate Abram, and to be kind and generous as he was. The Bible says, "Look not every man on his

own things, but every man also on the things of others." *Phil. ii. 4.*

When Abram returned, the king of Salem, who was named Melchizedek, came out to meet him, and gave bread and wine to him and his servants, to refresh them. Melchizedek was a priest as well as a king, and he blessed Abram, and said, "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hands." Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth part of all the riches that had been taken, to show how much he honored and respected him.

We read no more of the history of Melchizedek; but the Bible teaches us, that he is to remind us of another and greater king and priest—of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Melchizedek was a type, a likeness, of Jesus. Jesus is a king; He reigns in the hearts of his people now; He will reign over all the world hereafter. And he is a priest too; He has offered up the sacrifice of himself, to take away our sins, and He ever lives in heaven, to make intercession for us there.

VII.

ABRAM'S VISION.



AND now the Lord spoke to Abram again in a vision, to comfort and encourage him. God promised to do great and wonderful things for him at some future time, but not yet; for He was pleased first to try Abram's faith and patience. One night, God brought him out into the fields, and told him to look upwards. The stars were shining brightly in the sky, and God told Abram to try to count them; but there were more, many more, than Abram could number. Then God said, "So shall thy seed be." Abram had yet no children, but he believed God still. He felt sure, that the Lord could and would do as He promised. This is an example of faith for us. God speaks to us in the Bible, and all he says we are to believe. And those who truly believe, will be blessed with faithful Abram.

God promised Abram that he should inherit the land of Canaan; and He told him what would happen to his children, when he himself was dead. God commanded Abram to take several animals, and to di-

vide them in pieces, and offer them in sacrifice, and when the birds came to devour the dead bodies of these animals, Abram drove them away. That same night, God spoke to Abram again, and told him, that his children should go into a strange land, and be afflicted there; but that after 400 years, they should come out of that land, with great riches, and possess all the country of Canaan. And when it was dark, Abram saw, in vision, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp, which passed between the pieces of the sacrifice, which Abram had offered at God's command.

What was the meaning of this? Perhaps the vision was meant to teach Abram, what should happen to his children, in that strange land to which they were going. The smoking furnace might teach him that they would be afflicted; and the bright lamp might teach him that they would be comforted. God often afflicts his people, but He always comforts them too; and so, as we shall soon see, He afflicted and comforted Abram's children, the people of Israel in the land of Egypt.

VIII.

HAGAR.



SARAI, the wife of Abram, had a maid named Hagar, who was also Abram's wife. Hagar behaved disrespectfully to her mistress, and this made Sarai angry,

and she treated Hagar very harshly, and was so unkind to her, that Hagar ran away from her mistress, and fled into the wilderness. It was wrong of Hagar to be disrespectful to her mistress; and it was wrong

of Sarai to be unkind to her servant; and Abram himself was wrong in allowing these things to happen in his family.

But what became of Hagar? The angel of the Lord found her in the wilderness, by a well of water, and said to her, "Hagar, whence camest thou?" And Hagar answered, "I flee from my mistress Sarai." Then the angel told Hagar to return to her mistress, and to submit to her. This was Hagar's duty, and she could not be blessed nor happy while she forgot this duty, and gave way to her own pride and self-will. But the angel comforted Hagar, though he reproved her, and told her that she would have a son, who would be the father of a great nation. That son was to be named Ishmael, which means, "God shall

hear," because God had heard the affliction of Hagar, and had mercy on her. And the Angel said, that Ishmael should be a wild man, and that his hand would be against every man, and every man's hand against him. Ishmael was born not long after, and from him descended the nation of the Arabians, who have always been a wild people, as the angel foretold.

So Hagar was comforted; and she did as she was commanded, and returned to Sarai. But first, she gave a name to the angel who had appeared to her. She called him, "Thou God seest me." He saw Hagar in her affliction, and He can still see us in all our sorrows, and bless and comfort us, as he did her, if we pray to Him, and trust in Him.

IX.

THE COVENANT.



A**FTER** this, the Lord appeared to Abram, and again promised to bless and multiply him, and give him the land of Canaan, for a possession. And God changed his name, and called him Abraham, which means the father of a multitude, because many people should descend from him. And Sarai's name also was changed to Sarah, which means a princess. Then the Lord appointed a sign in Abraham's family, to mark them as a distinct people; this sign was the circumcision of every son who should be born in the family of Abraham.

Were the children of Ishmael to possess the land of Canaan? No; Ishmael was not the promised seed who should inherit Canaan; but God told Abraham, that Sarah should have a son who should be called Isaac, and that He would make with him, and with his children, an everlasting covenant? What is a covenant? An agreement and promise between two parties. The promise which God made to Noah, never to drown the world again, was a covenant; and the sign of it was the rainbow. And now, the promise God made to Abraham, to bless his seed, and to give them the land of Canaan,

was a covenant; and the sign of it was circumcision. And God had made another covenant with Adam in the garden of Eden, when He promised that Jesus Christ should come into the world, and die to save sinners. This was the greatest covenant of all. And we know that every one of God's covenants is true, because made by Him who cannot lie, and who will never deceive His people.

X.

THE ANGELS' VISIT.



ONE day, Abraham was sitting at his tent door, and he looked up, and saw three men standing by him. Then he rose up directly, and bowed respectfully to them, and asked, "Let now water be fetched and wash your feet, and rest under the tree, and I will bring you food." So the men sat down, and Abraham ran into the tent, to his wife Sarah, and told her to make cakes very quickly; then he ran to the field, and took a calf, and killed it, and dressed it; and he brought the calf, and the cakes, and butter, and milk, and gave them to the men under the tree; and they did eat, and Abraham stood and waited upon them. He was right to be kind and respectful: St. Peter says, "Use hospitality one to another." 1 *Peter* iv. 9. And St. Paul says, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers." *Hebrews* xii. 2.

When the men had finished eating, they asked, "Where is Sarah?" And Abraham said, "She is in the tent." Then the Lord told Abraham, He would soon give to him and Sarah a son; for God had not forgotten his promise made to Abraham so many years before. Sarah heard the Lord speak, but she did

not believe what He said, and she laughed and thought it could not be true. Then the Lord said, "Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Sarah shall have a son." Sarah was afraid, and denied, and said, "I laughed not;" but He said, "Nay, but thou didst laugh." So the men went away, and Abraham went with them towards Sodom. And then the Lord told Abraham, that He was angry with those two wicked cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, and was come now to destroy them.

Abraham thought of his nephew Lot, who was still in Sodom, and he felt afraid, and very sorry for him. So he asked the Lord to spare the city if fifty righteous people were there; and the Lord said He would. But soon, Abraham thought, that Sodom was so very wicked, that perhaps there were not fifty there who loved God; and he prayed the Lord again, five times, if there were forty-five, or forty, or thirty, or twenty, or only ten righteous people in Sodom, to save the city. And the Lord said, "If I find in Sodom ten righteous, I will not destroy it." Then the Lord went away, and Abraham returned unto his place.

It was right and kind of Abraham

to pray for Lot. We should all remember our friends in prayer, and ask God to take care of them. And when they are unhappy, or in danger, we should particularly pray God to comfort them, and to keep them from evil. "Pray one for another. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." *James v. 16.*

 XL.

S O D O M D E S T R O Y E D .

IT was evening when the two angels came to Sodom. Did they find there ten righteous people? No; there were not ten righteous in Sodom; and therefore it could not be saved. But the Lord remembered Abraham's prayer: and He remembered righteous Lot, who loved God all alone in the wicked city, and sent the angels to save him.

Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom; and when he saw the angels, he rose and bowed respectfully, and brought them to his house, and gave them food. Then they said, "Whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring out; for we will destroy this place." So Lot went out, and spoke to his sons-in-law, and said, "Get you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city." But they would not believe what he said. And when the morning was come, the angels hastened Lot, and said, "Arise, take thy wife and thy two daughters which are here;" and while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful unto him, and

they brought him forth. Then they said, "Escape for thy life to the mountain; stay not; look not behind thee." But Lot said, "I can not escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me. There is a little city near to flee unto, let me escape thither." And God mercifully allowed Lot to go to that little city. It was called Zoar.

So Lot, and his wife, and his two daughters, escaped from Sodom; and then "the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven." All the cities were destroyed; all the people died. Lot was saved, with his two daughters; but "his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

In the morning, Abraham rose very early, and went to look toward Sodom. No beautiful city was there now; it was all black with smoke; the houses destroyed; the people killed. But God had remembered Abraham's prayer for Lot, and kept him safely. But Lot had no house to live in; no riches, no possessions: he lived in a cave, with his two daughters, and was thankful to be even there.

XII.

J S A A C.



SOON after this, Isaac, the child of promise, was born. Ishmael, the son of Hagar, was now almost grown up, and he behaved very unkindly to his little brother Isaac, mocking him in his play. This was very wrong, and it grieved and displeased Abraham and Sarah; and Sarah said, "Cast out the bond-woman and her son." And God commanded Abraham to do this; so he rose in the morning, and called Hagar, and gave her a bottle of water, and bread, and her son Ishmael, and sent them both away: they went into the wilderness of Beersheba. The water in the bottle was soon spent; it was very hot, and Ishmael fainted, and his mother cast him under a bush, and she sat by herself and wept. But God heard Ishmael cry, and an angel called to Hagar from heaven, and said, "Hagar, fear not; God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thy hand." Then God showed Hagar "a well of water; and she went, and filled her bottle with water, and gave the lad drink." And God was with Ishmael, and made him well, and he grew up, and lived in the wilderness. Afterwards, he had many children, and they became a great people, as the angel had foretold.

God can take care of us wherever we are; He can keep us when we are ill, and make us well and strong again. When we are in sorrow, we should pray to God, and He will

hear us; and if we have done wrong, like Hagar and Ishmael, we must pray for pardon, and ask to be made humble, and gentle, and holy. All our hearts are full of anger, and disobedience, and pride; but God will give us the Holy Spirit, if we ask him, to make us gentle, and obedient, and humble.

After Hagar and Ishmael were gone away, God called to Abraham, and said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, and offer him for a burnt-offering, upon a mountain which I will show thee." Did God wish to make Abraham unhappy, and to kill his son? No, God only wished to try Abraham's faith; to see if Abraham would be obedient, and if he loved God more than his dear child. Abraham obeyed directly; for he knew God's command must be right, and he believed that God had power even to raise Isaac to life again after he was dead. All God does is good and right. When He sends us pain, or sickness, or sorrow, He does it wisely, for good, not for evil; we cannot know why, but God knows; let us ask Him to make us as obedient to his will as Abraham was.

Abraham arose in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two servants with him, and Isaac, and wood for the burnt-offering, and went to the place God showed him. As they walked along, and Abraham thought what he was to do to his dear son, his good, obedient child, he must have felt very sad; but Abraham loved God more

than he loved Isaac; and God gave him strength willingly to obey His command. After three days, they saw afar off the mountain where Isaac was to be offered. Then Abraham said to his servants, "Stay here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder, and worship, and come again to you." So the servants stayed, and Abraham and his son went towards the mountain.

As they walked along, Isaac said, "My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" For Isaac did not yet know that he was to be the lamb. Abraham said, "God will provide a lamb, my son." So they went on, and came to the place of which God had told Abraham. And then, Abraham built the altar, and put the wood upon it, and bound Isaac, and laid him upon the altar, and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham, out of heaven, and said, "Lay not thy hand

upon the lad; for now I know that thou fearest God, because thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from him." Then Abraham looked, and saw a ram, caught in a bush by the horns, and he offered the ram for a burnt-offering, instead of Isaac. And the angel called again to Abraham, and said, "Because thou hast done this thing, blessing, I will bless thee, and multiplying, I will multiply thee; and all nations shall be blessed in thy seed."

The Lord Jesus Christ was the seed of Abraham, who came to save sinners, to be a blessing to all people. "God so loved the world, that He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." *John* iii. 17. Abraham gave his son to God; God gave His Son for us; "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." 1 *John* iv. 14.

XIII.

ISAAC'S FAMILY.



SARAH was now 127 years old, and she died in Hebron, and Abraham and Isaac wept for her. Abraham bought the field of Machpelah, where there was a cave, for a burying-place; and there he laid the body of Sarah. But Sarah's soul did not die; it went to heaven, to be with God for ever. It is very sad to see our dear friends die, and to see their bodies put into the coffin, and laid in the tomb;

but if they loved God, as we may believe Sarah did, then we know their souls are gone to heaven, to be safe and happy there; and if we too love God, we shall go to meet them when we die, and never part from them again. This thought comforted Abraham.

Abraham had a good and faithful servant named Eliezer, who had lived with him, and Sarah, and Isaac, many years. Abraham called Eliezer, and said, "Go now to Mesopo-

tamia, where I used to live, and find there a wife for my son Isaac, and bring her here." Abraham did not wish his son to marry one of the women of Canaan, because they were idolators. Eliezer obeyed; he took ten of his master's camels, and went away to Mesopotamia. When he came there, it was evening; and he was tired, and sat down by a well.

He did not know the people who lived there, nor whom to choose for a wife for Isaac; but he prayed to God to direct him, and God heard his prayer. He soon saw a young woman coming to the well; she carried a pitcher, and she went, and filled her pitcher with water out of the well. The servant asked her to give him some water; and she was very kind, and gave him the pitcher, and then she gave water to the camels. Eliezer had asked God to show him, by this sign, the wife whom he was to take for Isaac, and now he felt quite sure that this was the right person; so he took two bracelets, and put them upon her hand, and gave her a gold ear-ring, and asked, "Whose daughter art thou?" She told him her name was Rebekah, and her father was Bethuel, a relation of Abraham. Then Eliezer went home, and staid with Bethuel and his family. And he asked if Rebekah might go to Hebron, and marry Isaac; and they were willing she should go, for they believed it was God's will. So Rebekah left her father, and mother, and brothers, and sisters; and went with her nurse and her maids, upon camels, with Eliezer, to Hebron. And then Eliezer told Isaac all about Rebekah; and how God had answered his prayer; and Isaac

loved her, and she became his wife; and God blessed them.

Abraham was now a very old man, 175 years old. He died, and his sons Isaac and Ishmael laid his body by Sarah, in the cave in the field of Machpelah, and his happy soul went to God, whom he loved.

God gave two sons to Isaac and Rebekah. Their names were Esau and Jacob. When they grew up, Esau was fond of hunting in the field, but Jacob was very quiet, and liked to stay in his tent. One day, when Esau had been hunting, he came home very hot, and tired, and hungry. Jacob was eating pottage in the tent, and his brother said to him, "Give me pottage, for I am faint." Jacob said, "Sell me thy birthright;" and Esau sold his birthright for the pottage, and Jacob gave him the food he wanted, and Esau went away. But God was not pleased with Esau: he had done what was wrong. He was the eldest son of his father, and it was his privilege and duty to offer sacrifices, as a priest in his family; this was his birthright. But Esau did not love holy things; he did not believe in Jesus, who should come and be a sacrifice to take away the sin of the world. He thought Jacob might attend to these things, but he cared only for the pottage; and for that he was willing to lose his birthright.

It is very sad, and very wicked, to despise holy things, as Esau did; to care more for our bodies than our souls; to think more about what we shall eat and drink, than about what we must do to be saved. Jesus says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." *Matthew vi. 33.*

Jacob was a better man than Esau. But it was not right of him to take away Esau's birthright, when his brother was hungry, and asked for bread. We ought to be glad to give away what we have, and not wish to be paid for being kind.

Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his venison, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Isaac was now a very old

man: he could not see; his eyes were dim with age. But God was with Isaac; He did not forget him. God will keep His people all their lives; when they are young, and when they grow old; and when they die, He will be with them, and bring them safely to heaven. He says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." *Hebrews xiii. 5.*

XIV.

JACOB AND ESAU.

ISAAAC felt he must now soon die, and he called Esau, and said to him, "Go now, and bring me savoury meat, that I may eat it, and bless thee, before I die." Esau obeyed; he took his bow and his arrow, and went into the field to hunt for venison. When Rebekah heard Isaac speak to Esau, she was not pleased, because she wished Isaac to bless Jacob, for God had said Jacob should be greater than Esau. So she called Jacob, and said, "Esau is now gone to hunt for venison, that his father may eat and bless him. Now obey me, and go, and kill two kids, and I will make savoury meat, and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and bless thee." But Jacob said, "I know my father cannot see, but he can feel. Esau is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man; and if my father feel me, he will know I am Jacob, and not Esau, and I shall seem to him a deceiver, and bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing." But Rebekah told Jacob to go and

bring the kids quickly, and he obeyed, and went. It is right for children to obey their parents when the parents tell them to do right, but not when they tell them to do wrong. We must obey God more than man, or woman, or father, or mother. Jacob knew it was wicked to try to deceive his blind father, and he ought to have told his mother so respectfully and meekly. Jacob and his mother both displeased God then.

Rebekah took the kids which Jacob brought, and made savoury meat, such as his father loved, and then she took Esau's clothes, and put them upon Jacob; and she put the hairy skins of the kids upon his neck and hands, that he might feel rough like Esau, and sent him with the meat to his father. So Jacob came in, and said, "My father, here is the venison; rise, eat, and bless me." But Isaac asked, "How didst thou find it so quickly, my son?" Then Jacob said, "Because the Lord brought it to me." Isaac told his son to come

near to him: and he felt him, and asked, "Art thou my very son Esau? The voice is like Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau?" Then Jacob again said, "Yes, I am Esau, thy eldest son, Esau." Isaac now believed him, and he called him near, and ate the meat, and drank the wine which Jacob gave him. Then he blessed and kissed his deceitful son, and told him what should happen in a future time; for God taught Isaac to prophesy. He said, "The Lord bless thee, and give thee plenty of corn and wine; let people serve thee, and be lord over thy brethren." All this was fulfilled, when the Israelites, Jacob's children, afterwards possessed the fruitful land of Caanan, and became a powerful people.

Isaac finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob went away. Esau was now come home, and he brought the venison to Isaac; for he did not know what his brother had done. When Esau asked his father to bless him, Isaac wondered very much, and said, "Who art thou?" and Esau answered, "I am thine eldest son, Esau." Then Isaac trembled, and asked again, "Who? Who was he that came, and brought me venison, and I ate, and blessed him before thou camest? yes, and he shall be blessed." When Esau heard this, he cried and said, "O bless me, even me, also, my father;" and Esau wept. But Isaac told him, that though God would give Esau many blessings, yet Jacob would be greater than he; and this made Esau very angry, and he thought, "My father will die soon, and then I will slay my brother

Jacob." When Rebekah knew that Esau hated Jacob, and wished to kill him, she called her younger son and said, "Go now to Haran, where my brother Laban lives, thy uncle; and stay there a few days, till Esau's anger is turned away, and then I will send and fetch thee." So Isaac and Rebekah blessed Jacob, and prayed God to keep him safely, and sent him away to Padan-aram.

It was night. Jacob was weary, and he laid down on the cold ground and put hard stones under his head for a pillow, and soon fell asleep. And God gave him a beautiful dream when he was asleep. He saw a ladder set on the earth, and its top reached to heaven, and holy angels were going up and down upon it. Above it stood the Lord, and He spoke to Jacob. He said, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac. I will give the land where thou liest, to thy children, for a possession." And then the Lord told Jacob, that a Saviour should come into the world, who would be blessing to all people, and He said, "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places, and bring thee again into this land." How thankful Jacob was to hear the Lord speak to him so kindly, when he had been so forgetful, and so unthankful to God! God's eye is always upon us, when we sleep, and when we wake. He always remembers us, though we very often forget Him, as Jacob did. Let us think of Him, and love Him more.

When Jacob awoke, he said, "God is in this place, and I knew it not;" and he was afraid and

said, "How dreadful is this place! This is the house of God, and the gate of Heaven!" Then he took the stone, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon it, for he wished

the place to be remembered as holy ground; and he called the name of it Bethel, or the house of God, because God appeared to him there.

XV.

JACOB WITH LABAN.

BEFORE Jacob went away from Bethel, he prayed to God, and asked him to keep him, and be with him, wherever he went; and to give him bread to eat, and clothes to put on; and to bring him again to his father's house. And then, Jacob said, "The Lord shall be my God." He felt now, that God alone could make him happy, and he really wished to love and obey God with all his heart. Jacob must have been very sorry for his past sins, his wicked lies and deceit; and he prayed for the pardon of them all; but when God had forgiven him, and blessed him, then Jacob was happy. Jacob went on, and came to Padan-aram. He saw a field, and a well, and flocks of sheep, and shepherds by it. The shepherds rolled away the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone back again, to keep the water safely. Then Jacob asked the men, "Do you know Laban? Is he well?" And they said, "Yes, we know him: he is well, and his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep." Rachel was a cousin of Jacob's, and he was very glad to see her, and told her his name. And Jacob wept when he saw her. Rachel told her father

Laban, that Jacob was come; and Laban went to meet him, and brought him home, and asked him to stay in his house. Jacob lived many years with Laban, and kept his sheep; and, after some time, he married his cousin Rachel, whom he loved very much. And God blessed Jacob and gave him many children, and great possessions of sheep, and oxen, and goats, and camels. But when Laban saw that Jacob had more cattle than he had, he was angry and jealous, and looked unkindly at Jacob. But God would not let Laban do anything to hurt Jacob, for He remembered His promise at Bethel, "I will be with thee." And so God told Jacob to go away from Laban, and to return to Canaan. Then Jacob called his family, and put them upon camels, and took all his cattle, and his possessions, and went away secretly. Three days after, Laban heard that he was gone, and he ran after Jacob, and overtook him in Mount Gilead. But in the night, God came to Laban, and told him not to hurt Jacob. So they made a covenant, and promised to be kind one to the other, and then they parted. "In the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them; and

Laban departed, and returned unto his place."

When Laban was gone, Jacob went on towards Canaan, and as he went, he saw some angels coming to meet him. They were sent by God to comfort Jacob, and to tell him that God was there, to bless and keep him. Jacob and his family were now near Seir, where his brother Esau lived. So Jacob sent servants before, to tell Esau, that he had lived many years with Laban, and was now coming home, and that he was very rich, and had many oxen, and asses, and camels, and servants, and he very humbly begged Esau to be kind and friendly to him. But when the servants came back to Jacob, they said, "Esau is coming to meet thee, and 400 men with him." Then Jacob was very much afraid, for he thought, that perhaps Esau was still angry with him, and was coming to kill him and all his family. So he divided the people who were with him, and prepared to meet Esau. He took goats, and sheep, and oxen, and camels, and told a servant to stand by them, and to say, when Esau came, "Thy servant Jacob gives these to my lord Esau." It was very right of Jacob to behave humbly to Esau, and very wise of him too, thus to try to subdue Esau's anger by kindness. But after all, Jacob knew he had no power to help and save himself; only God could save him, so he

went and prayed to Him. And when we are sorry and afraid, we should do the same, and God promises to hear us; He says, "Call upon me in the time of trouble, and I will deliver thee." *Ps.* l. 15.

God heard Jacob's prayer. In the night, when Jacob was alone, a man came to him, and wrestled with him. Jacob knew who he was, and he asked for a blessing from him. And the Lord blessed Jacob, and gave him the new name of Israel, which means a prince with God. And Jacob called the place, Peniel, or the face of God, because he had there seen God face to face. Jacob felt now peaceful and happy, and when he saw Esau coming, he had no fear. He went to meet him, and bowed to the ground seven times. And he had now no need to fear: for God had subdued Esau's anger, in answer to Jacob's prayer. "Esau ran, and fell on Jacob's neck, and kissed him." They both wept; for they thought of their past hatred, and unkindness to one another; but now they wished to live in peace and brotherly love. Jacob's family all came, and bowed respectfully to Esau; and Jacob gave Esau the camels, and goats, and oxen. Esau refused to take them at first, but Jacob urged him, so he took them. This was a happy end to all their anger and disputings. Let us learn from it "how good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity." *Ps.* cxxxiii. 1.

XVI.

JACOB AT BETHEL.

BUT Esau and Jacob could not stay long together. Jacob went on his journey, and Esau returned to Seir. They parted very affectionately; and then Jacob went to Shechem, and staid there. And now Jacob had new troubles. His family soon forgot God, and began to worship idols; and his sons were disobedient, and passionate, and cruel. But God said to Jacob, "Go now to Bethel, and make an altar there unto God." It was at Bethel that Jacob saw the ladder, many years before, when God promised to keep him, and to be with him wherever he went; and God had not forgotten His promise, though Jacob had forgotten Bethel. God always remembers His people, but they are often ungrateful, and do not remember Him.

Jacob obeyed God directly. He told his family to bring to him all their foolish idols; and he talked to them about God, and told them they must not again make Him angry, by worshipping gods which could not help or save them; and he took away these idols, and hid them under a tree in Shechem. Then they all went to Bethel; and there Jacob built an altar, and praised his God who had taken care of him so many years. God came to Jacob, and blessed him in Bethel. He called him by his new name, Israel; and told him again, that his children after him should possess the land of Canaan.

Soon after this, death came into

Jacob's family. First, Deborah died, Rebekah's nurse, and was buried under an oak at Bethel. And then, when they came to Ephrath, Rachel too died, and was buried there. The body was laid in the tomb; and Jacob set a pillar upon her grave; but her soul went to Heaven, where is no more death, nor sorrow, nor pain. She left a babe named Benjamin. Children who lose their parents and friends, will have God for their Father, if they ask Him to take care of them; and He will never leave them; when their father and mother forsake them, then the Lord will take them up. *Ps. xxvii. 10.*

Jacob and his family went on now to Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac had lived so many years, Jacob's old home. Were his father and mother there now? Not Rebekah, she was dead; Jacob never saw his mother again. But Isaac was alive; he was now 180 years old. Jacob was glad to see his father once more, and to have his forgiveness, and his blessing; and Isaac must have rejoiced to know, that Jacob was now a better man; that he loved God with all his heart, and that his past sins had been repented of, and forgiven. Isaac soon after died, and his happy soul went to Heaven. Then Esau came to see Isaac for the last time; and he and Jacob wept together over their father and buried him. Esau and Jacob loved one another now; but they could not live together, because, like Abraham and Lot, they

were both very rich, and there was not room for all their cattle. So Esau went again to Mount Seir, or Edom, where he lived like a king, and had great possessions, and became very powerful. But Jacob staid in Canaan, where his fathers Abraham and Isaac had lived, in the land which God had promised to give to them, and to their children.

If God is pleased to give us riches and possessions in this world, we must be thankful for them, and use them to His glory. If we have money, we ought to be glad to give to the poor, and not to keep all for ourselves. But if God makes us poor, then we must not murmur, nor be discontented; we must not wish for more, nor covet the possessions of the rich. And whether rich or poor, we should ask God

to give us a possession above, in Heaven.

Jacob was now an old man: he had known much sorrow in past years; Esau's hatred; Laban's unkindness; his fear that his brother would come and hurt him; his long journeys far from his home and parents; the death of his wife, and his father; Jacob remembered all these troubles. But then he remembered, too, how merciful God had been to him; how he had kept him all his life; and delivered him from all evil: and Jacob felt he could love God, and trust Him for ever. God will not forget His people, even when they are old and helpless. He says, "To hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear; I will carry, and will deliver you." *Isaiah xlv. 4.*

XVII.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

JACOB had twelve sons:—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, and Zebulon, who were grown up; Joseph, who was seventeen years old, and little Benjamin. The ten eldest were wicked men, but Joseph feared God: and Jacob loved him more than the others, and he gave him a coat of many colors. The ten brothers were jealous, when they saw their father loved Joseph so much, and they hated Joseph, and were very unkind to him. But God was with Joseph, to love and keep him.

One night, God sent a wonderful

dream to Joseph. He thought he was binding sheaves of corn in the field with his brothers; and the sheaves of his brothers arose, and stood up, and bowed before Joseph's sheaf. God told Joseph, by this dream, that his brothers should obey him, and that he should rule over them; but they laughed, and were very angry, when he told them his dream. Soon after, he dreamed again, and saw the sun, and moon, and eleven stars bow before him. Joseph told his dream to his father, and his brothers: Jacob understood the meaning of the dream, and thought much about it; but the brothers only envied him still more.

Jacob's sons were shepherds, and took care of their father's flocks: and the older ten went to feed the sheep in Shechem; but Joseph and little Benjamin were with Jacob. One day, Israel called Joseph, and said, "Go now, and see if thy brethren are well, and if the flocks are well, and bring me word again." So Joseph went away from Hebron, and came to Shechem; but his brothers were not there, and he was told that they were gone to Dothan. Then Joseph went on to Dothan, and there he found them. And now some of these wicked men said, when they saw him afar off, "Here comes the dreamer; now let us slay him, and cast him into a pit, and say an evil beast has devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams." But Reuben said, "Let us not kill him, but cast him into this pit;" for Reuben was less cruel, and thought he could then take him out, and bring him home safely to his father. So when Joseph came to them, his cruel brothers seized him, and tore off his coat of many colors, and threw him into the pit; the pit was empty, there was no water in it; and then they sat down, and ate bread.

While these wicked, cruel brothers were eating, they looked up, and saw a great many people coming towards them. The people were Ishmaelites, children of Ishmael, the son of Hagar. They came from

Gilead; and they had camels, which carried the spices they were going to take into Egypt. When Judah saw the Ishmaelites, he persuaded his brothers to sell Joseph to them, for Judah loved money; so Joseph was taken out of the pit, and sold for twenty pieces of silver; and the Ishmaelites took him, and brought him to Egypt, and there they sold him again to a man named Potiphar. Reuben was not with his brothers when Joseph was sold; and when he came back to the pit, and did not find him, he rent his clothes, and ran to his brothers, and said, "The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?" But they cared nothing for Reuben's sorrow. They killed a kid, and dipped Joseph's coat of many colors in the blood; and then they went home, and showed the coat to their father, and said, "This have we found; know now if it be thy son's coat or not." Jacob remembered the coat directly; and he said, "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is, without doubt, rent in pieces." And then Jacob wept, and rent his clothes, and refused to be comforted. We read that, many years before, Jacob deceived his father Isaac; now Jacob's children deceived him. God does not forget sin; He had forgiven Jacob; but Jacob suffered for his wicked deceit all his life, to teach him what an evil thing sin is!

XVIII.

JOSEPH IN PRISON.



JOSEPH was a good and industrious servant to Potiphar; he was not idle nor deceitful, nor disrespectful, nor dishonest; and he was very careful of his master's things; and God blessed him, and made him a blessing to Potiphar, and all his family.

Potiphar's wife was a very wicked woman; she hated Joseph, and told her husband many things about him that were not true; and asked his master to punish him. Potiphar believed all she said, and commanded Joseph to be put into prison. Potiphar did not know that Joseph had not done wrong; but God knew all the truth, for He cannot be deceived.

Joseph went to prison; but God was with him there. He can keep His people wherever they are, and comfort them in all their sorrows; and He blessed Joseph, and made the keeper of the prison love him. Joseph took care of every thing in the prison, and of all the prisoners; and he was so kind and gentle, that they loved him, and told him all their sorrows.

While Joseph was in prison, the chief butler and the chief baker of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, offended their master, and he sent them both to prison. One morning, when Joseph came in to see them, he found them looking sad and unhappy, and he asked, "Why look ye so sadly to-day?" They said, "We have dreamed dreams; and we have no one to interpret them to us." Joseph

answered, "God sends dreams; He only knows the interpretation; tell me your dreams, I pray you." Then the butler told his dream, and said, "I saw in my dream a vine, and in the vine three branches; and they budded, and the flowers came, and the fruit ripened; and I took Pharaoh's cup, and gathered the grapes, and pressed them into the cup, and gave it to Pharaoh." Then Joseph said, "The three branches are three days. In three days Pharaoh will restore thee to thy place, and thou shalt give the cup into his hand." And then Joseph said, "Do not forget me when it shall be well with thee; speak for me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of prison. For I was stolen away from Canaan, and brought to Egypt, and I have done nothing that they should put me into this dungeon." Then the baker told his dream and said, "I had three baskets upon my head; they were full of baked meats for Pharaoh; and the birds came, and eat the meat out of the baskets on my head." Joseph answered, "The three baskets are three days. In three days, Pharaoh will hang thee upon a tree, and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee."

All happened as Joseph said, for God had given him wisdom and power to interpret the dreams rightly. In three days was Pharaoh's birthday, and he made a feast for all his servants, and called the butler and baker out of prison. He forgave the butler, and restored him to his place, and he gave the cup

into Pharaoh's hand; but the baker was hanged, as Joseph said.

Did the butler remember Joseph, and ask the king to take him out of prison? No: he quite forgot him: when he was happy and safe

himself, he thought no more about Joseph. But God always remembers us; He says to every one who serves him, "They may forget, but I will not forget thee." *Isaiah* xlix. 15.

XIX.

PHARAOH'S DREAMS.



TWO years after the butler came out of prison, Pharaoh king of Egypt had two wonderful dreams.

He thought he stood by the river, and saw seven fat kine come out of it, and feed in a meadow. Soon after he saw seven other kine come out, very thin and bad; and they ate up the seven fat ones. So Pharaoh awoke. Then he slept again, and dreamed; and he saw seven fine good ears of corn come up upon one stem; and soon after, seven ears more, very bad and thin; and the bad ears devoured the seven good ears; and the king awoke. In the morning, Pharaoh wondered what these dreams could mean, and he called all his wise men, and asked them to interpret them. But they had no heavenly wisdom, and God did not enable them to explain the dreams He had sent to Pharaoh. But when the butler heard Pharaoh and the wise men talking together about the dreams, he remembered his own dream, which he had two years before, and which Joseph had interpreted so truly; and he went to Pharaoh, and said, "I remember to-day my faults long ago, when the king was angry, and sent me to prison, with the chief baker. We

dreamed, in one night, I and he; and there was a young man, a Hebrew, in the prison with us; and he interpreted our dreams to us; and as he interpreted, so it was; I was forgiven and the baker was hanged." Then Pharaoh sent, and called for Joseph directly.

Joseph had been a long time in the prison; but though the butler had forgotten him, his Father in Heaven had not forgotten him: God was now doing wonderful things for Joseph, which he did not yet know. Joseph washed, and shaved, and took off his prison clothes, and put on new, and came to Pharaoh. Then the king told his dreams, and asked Joseph to interpret them. But Joseph was not proud of his wisdom; he knew he had no power, no wisdom, in himself; but that all he had God gave to him; and so he said to Pharaoh, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." And God taught Joseph rightly to interpret the dreams. He said, "The seven fat kine, and the seven good ears of corn, are seven years of great fruitfulness; and the seven thin kine, and the seven bad ears, are seven years of famine. Seven years are coming of great plenty in

the land of Egypt; and then seven years of famine will begin, when there will be no corn. Now let Pharaoh look for a wise man, and set him over the land; and let him gather up the corn in the seven good years, and keep it laid up in all the cities of Egypt: that when the seven years of famine come, there may be food to eat." Pharaoh was pleased with Joseph's wisdom and advice; and he said, Joseph should rule over the land, and the people should obey him. Then the king gave him a ring, and put a chain upon his neck, and dressed him in fine linen, and made him ride in a chariot; and all the people honored him.

During the seven plenteous years, Joseph commanded the people to gather up the corn, and lay it safely in barns and storehouses; and they gathered very much corn; so much that they could not count it. But the seven good years ended, and then the seven bad years began. It was a sad time. There was no corn to reap; all was dry and dead; and the poor people cried for food.

The famine was in Canaan also; Jacob and his sons had no bread. But the Egyptians came to Joseph, and he opened all the storehouses, and sold corn to them: and when that was gone, they came again, and bought more; and Joseph had plenty for them all. So when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent his ten eldest sons to buy some: but Benjamin staid with his father; for Jacob loved him so much, that he did not like him to go away. The ten brothers went to Egypt, and came and stood before Joseph, and bowed to the

ground. Did they remember Joseph? No: for Joseph was only a boy when he went to Egypt; and now he was a man thirty-seven years old: but Joseph remembered his brothers directly, and he remembered, too, his dream of the sheaves of his brothers bowing down to him; how wonderfully that dream was now explained! But Joseph did not tell his brothers who he was, for he wished to try if they were still wicked, cruel, deceitful men; or if they were sorry for their past sins, and had turned to God. So he asked, "Who are you? Whence do you come?" They said, "We come from Canaan, to buy corn." Then he asked again, "Have you more brothers?" They said, "We were twelve brothers; but now one is not, and the youngest is with his father, in the land of Canaan." But Joseph said, "I do not know if you tell me the truth or not: I will prove you: one of you shall stay here a prisoner; and the others shall go, and take corn for your families, and bring your youngest brother to me; then I shall know that you are true men." The brothers were much distressed to hear this, and Joseph too was distressed to see their sorrow; and he turned away and wept. Then he hid his tears, and took Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

Joseph did all this not from revenge, but to make his brothers remember and feel their past sins, and their unkindness to him. And so they did. They said to one another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear.

therefore is this distress come upon us." Sin, secret sin, will always at last be discovered, and punished: | "Be sure your sin will find you out." *Num. xxxii. 23.*

XX.

BENJAMIN SENT TO EGYPT.



HE nine brothers paid Joseph for the corn; and he told his servants to fill their sacks, and to give them food to eat on the road. Then he told the servant to put the money they had paid, into the sacks again secretly; and the brothers laid the sacks upon their asses, and went away. When they came to the inn, one man opened his sack, to give food to his ass, and there he saw his money again; and when they came home, they all found their money put again into the sacks; and they wondered very much how this could be. Jacob was very sorry when he heard that Simeon was a prisoner in Egypt, and that Benjamin was to go with his brothers; and he said, "My son shall not go with you. Me have ye bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin away." Reuben answered, "Give him to me, I will bring him to thee again." But Jacob would not let him go.

When all the corn was eaten, and Jacob and his sons had no more food, Jacob said to his sons, "Go again to Egypt; buy us a little food." But they answered, "We must not, we dare not, go without Benjamin; for the man solemnly commanded us to bring him." Then Judah said, "Send the lad with me,

and we will go. I will be surety for him." Then Jacob remembered, that the same gracious God who had kept him all his life, had power to keep his dear child also; so at last he said, "If it must be so, go; take a present for the man; fruit, and nuts, and honey, and spices; and give him again the money you found in your sacks, and take more money for the new corn, and go, and Benjamin may go with you; and God give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin." Then they all arose, and took Benjamin, and went to Egypt again.

Jacob was alone now: but still God was with him, to keep and comfort him. What a blessing it is to those who love God, that He is always near them; His eye upon them; His hand around them! He can comfort His people in all their sorrows, as He comforted Jacob in his sorrow. He says, "I will never fail thee, nor forsake thee." *Josh. i. 5.*

When Joseph saw Benjamin coming with his brothers, he said to his servant, "Bring the men home; they shall dine with me to-day." So the servant obeyed, and brought them all to Joseph's house, and talked kindly to them, and gave them water, and washed their feet, and fed their asses; and Simeon

was sent to them out of prison. When Joseph came home, his brothers gave him the presents they had brought, and bowed before him; but Joseph would not take their money. Then he asked, "Is your father well?" And they said, "He is well." Then he asked again, "Is this your youngest brother?" and he looked very affectionately at Benjamin, and said, "God be gracious unto thee, my son." The tears were in Joseph's eyes, but he did not wish his brothers to see him weep; he went into his own room, and wept there. It was love and thankfulness that made him weep. Then he washed his face and went to them again, and told the servants to set on bread. Then they made a feast, and Joseph sent messes to all his brothers; but Benjamin's mess was five times larger than any of the others; and "they drank and were merry with him."

When they had finished, Joseph said secretly to his servant, "Put the men's corn-money into their sacks again; and take my silver cup, and put it into Benjamin's sack." The servant obeyed; and in the morning he sent them all away. When they were gone, Joseph told his servant to run after the men, and accuse them of having stolen the cup, the silver cup out of which his master drank. The men went quickly, and soon overtook the brothers, and told them all Joseph had said. The brothers wondered very much, for they knew they had stolen nothing, and they said, "With whomsoever the cup is found, let him die, and we will be slaves to my lord." So they all took down their sacks, and the servant looked, and

found the cup in Benjamin's sack, where he had put it. Then the brothers rent their clothes, and went back again to Joseph, and fell down before him. And Joseph said, "What is this that you have done?" Judah answered, "What shall we say? God has found out our iniquity: behold, we are my Lord's servants." But Joseph said, "The man with whom the cup was found, he shall be my servant; but go you in peace to your father." Then Judah came near to Joseph, and said, "I am surety for the lad unto my father: let me then abide, instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go with his brethren: for how shall I go to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest I see the evil that shall come on my father." Then Joseph said to the servants, "Go out from me." And every one went away, and Joseph stood alone with his brothers. Then he wept aloud, and said, "I am Joseph your brother whom ye sold into Egypt: is my father yet alive?" His brothers could not answer, but Joseph spoke very gently to them again, and said, "Do not be sorry, nor angry with yourselves because you sold me into Egypt: for God sent me here to preserve life. He has done wonders for me, and given me wisdom, to lay up corn for the famine, that the people may not die. Hasten now, and bring my father to me to Egypt; and I will nourish him and you, all the years of famine. Tell him that I live, and that I am a rich and happy man in Egypt; and that God has kept and blessed me all the years I have lived here." Then he fell upon his brothers' necks, and kissed them, and wept upon them;

and they all talked and wept together.

King Pharaoh was glad to hear Joseph's brothers were come, and he sent a present to Jacob, and wagons to bring him and all his family to Egypt. Then Joseph gave clothes, and money, and food, to his brothers, and sent them away. They went home rejoicing, and ran to Jacob, and cried, "Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over Egypt." But Jacob could not believe the good news, till they showed him the wagons, and told him that Joseph

had sent them to carry him to Egypt; and then he said, "It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die."

We see now why Joseph, at first, appeared so harsh to his brothers: it was to prove them for their good. When he found they were really penitent and sincere, and just and true in what they did, he showed them directly, how willingly he forgave them all. Let us learn, like Joseph, to return good for evil. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him." *Rom. xii. 20.*

XXI.

JACOB IN EGYPT.



JACOB and his sons soon began their journey to Egypt. It was a long journey, but a very happy one for Jacob. When they came to Beersheba, Israel offered sacrifices to God, and thanked and praised Him for all His mercies. In the night, God spoke to Jacob, and said, "I am God; the God of thy fathers Abraham and Isaac; fear not to go to Egypt; for I will be with thee; and will make thee there a great people; and, in a future time, I will bring thy children's children again to Canaan." Then Jacob arose, and went to Egypt with all his family; his sons and their wives, and their children, seventy people. When Joseph saw the wagons coming, he commanded his servant to bring his chariot, and rode in it to meet Jacob. Joseph fell on his father's neck, and kissed him, and they both wept a long

time. They had much to tell one another: all the wonderful things God had done; all their past sorrows and fears; and all their joy now.

The next day, Joseph brought his father and his brothers to king Pharaoh. The king was very glad to see them, and he spoke gently and kindly to old Jacob, and asked, "How old art thou?" Jacob said, "The days of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the years of my life been." And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out. Joseph gave his father and his brothers a possession in Egypt, and fed them with bread all the years of famine. The people still came to Joseph to buy corn, but now all their money was gone: Joseph took it, and gave it to Pharaoh. Then the people brought their cattle, and gave them for corn: and when *they* were gone, they sold

their fields: so all the land of Egypt became Pharaoh's except the land of the priests, which was not sold. After the famine was over God sent corn and bread in plenty again.

The story of Joseph is wonderful. He knew not why God sent him to Egypt; nor why he was put in prison; nor why he was so many years alone and sorrowful, far away from his dear father. But

God knew why: He is wise; He knows all things: He sees the end of all, and He commands all; and he does all rightly. Let us love and serve this wise, and great, and gracious God! Then He will be with us, to keep and comfort us, as he did Joseph: we know that "All things work together for good to them that love God." *Rom. viii. 28.*

XXII.

JACOB'S DEATH.



JACOB lived seventeen years happily in Egypt with all his family, and saw his sons' sons growing up around him. But now he was 147 years old, and he became ill, and felt that he must soon die, and he sent for his son Joseph to bless him, and talk to him. Joseph went directly to his father, and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob was very ill, and lying upon his bed; but when he saw Joseph, he sat up, and began to talk to him of that gracious God who had been so kind to them all; who had appeared to him many years before at Bethel, and promised to give the land of Canaan to his children for a possession. Then Jacob turned round, and saw Joseph's two sons standing by their father, and asked, "Who are they?" Joseph said, "They are my sons, the children whom God has given me in Egypt." Then Jacob told them to come to him, that he might bless them: and he put his arms around them, and kissed them, and thanked

God who had shown them to him. Then he put his hands upon their heads, and blessed both them and their father. He said, "The God who hath kept my father Abraham and Isaac, who has taken care of me all my life, the angel who redeemed me from evil, bless the lads." Then Jacob called all his sons, and blessed them. God taught him to prophesy, and he told his sons of many wonderful things, which would happen when they were dead, and in their graves. Jacob told his sons, that God would bring their children home again to Canaan after many years; and he commanded them not to bury him in Egypt, but to carry his body to Canaan, to the cave of Machpelah, and bury it there, by Abraham, and Isaac, and their families.

When Jacob had finished all he wished to say, he lay down again on the bed, and died, and his happy soul went to God, the God of his fathers, to be with him for ever. Jacob was a sinner, like each of us; he had done many wicked things;

out all his sins were washed away ; he had asked forgiveness, and God had heard his prayer, and saved him.

When Joseph saw that Jacob was dead, he "fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him." All the people wept for Jacob seventy days. Then Joseph said to king Pharaoh, "My father commanded me not to bury him in Egypt, but to carry him to Canaan, to his own grave: let me now go to Canaan, and bury my father, and then I will come back again." And Pharaoh gave him leave; so Joseph, and his brothers, and their servants, went up to Canaan with chariots and horses: but their little children, and their flocks, staid in Egypt. They carried with them Jacob's dead body: and when they came to Canaan, they mourned for him again seven days; and then went on their journey, and buried Jacob in the field of Machpelah, by his fathers Abraham and Isaac. Let us remember, that we too must die, our bodies must lie in the tomb, as Jacob's did, and our friends will weep

for us, as his children wept for him. But if our sins have all been pardoned, as Jacob's were, then we shall be happy when we die. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." *Rev. xiv. 13.*

Joseph and his brethren finished burying their father, and looked at his tomb for the last time, and went back to Egypt. And then again Joseph's brothers asked him to forgive them, for they had not forgotten their past unkindness to him. Joseph wept when they spoke to him, and told them not to fear, for that he would take care of them. Then they were comforted, and they all lived in Egypt in love and peace. Joseph lived to be 110 years old; and when he was going to die, he said to his brothers, "I die, but fear not: God will be with you, and, in a future time, bring your children to Canaan." And Joseph told them to keep his bones, that they might be carried to Canaan, and be buried there. So Joseph died, "and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

XXIII.

AN EXAMPLE OF PATIENCE.



ABOUT this time, there was dwelling in Uz, in Arabia, a man named Job. Job was a very rich man; he had great possessions of sheep, and camels, and oxen, and asses: he was the greatest man in the east at that time. And Job was a holy man, as well as a rich man. The Bible says, he "feared God;" the same God whom Abra-

ham, and Isaac, and Jacob feared; and he hoped as they did, to be saved by the Lord Jesus Christ, who was to come into the world to die for sinners. Job had several children; and he taught them to serve God, and prayed for them, and offered sacrifices for them, according to the command of God.

"Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present them-

selves before the Lord; and Satan came also among them." What does this mean? Who were the sons of God, and why did God let Satan come among them? The Bible does not tell us. Perhaps the sons of God were his true and faithful servants who came to worship before him; and, perhaps, Satan came among them, as he comes now among us, to tempt them to sin, and to lead them away from God.

But God spoke to Satan, and said to him, "Whence comest thou?" And Satan answered, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." Then God asked Satan again, if he had considered his servant Job, what a holy and upright man he was, and one who feared God. Satan had long known and hated Job, as he knows and hates all the people of God; and he even dared to accuse Job before God, and to say, that all his goodness was false and hypocritical; and that he pretended to fear God, only that he might be rich, and safe, and prosperous, and not because he really loved him.

God knew all the truth about Job. He knew that Job was sincere, and not false and hypocritical as Satan said; but it pleased God to allow Satan, at that time, to try Job, and to vex and afflict him; and God did this for Job's own good; to make him more humble, more patient, and more believing. So the Lord said to Satan, "All that he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand." Then "Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord," to use all the power allowed him, to afflict and trouble righteous Job.

There was a day when Job's sons and daughters were eating, and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house; and there came a messenger to Job, and said, "The oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them, and some enemies, the Sabeans, fell upon them, and took them away, and have slain the servants with the sword; and I only am escaped to tell thee." And while this messenger was speaking, there came another to Job, and said, "The fire is fallen from Heaven, and has burned up the sheep and the servants; and I only am escaped to tell thee." And while he was speaking, another messenger came, and said, "The Chaldeans fell upon the camels, and carried them away, and slew the servants with the sword, and I only am escaped to tell thee." And while this man was speaking, a fourth messenger came, and said, "Thy sons and daughters were eating and drinking in their eldest brother's house, and there came a great wind, and smote the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped to tell thee."

Poor Job! a very little time before, he had been the richest and most prosperous man in the east. Now, he had lost everything; his flocks and his herds, and his servants, and his children too,—all were gone. What did he do? How did he bear so much sorrow coming upon him so suddenly? There was one thing Job still had, and that enabled him to bear all this patiently and submissively. Job had not lost his trust in God. He felt quite sure that these troubles did not come without God's permission;

and he knew that God would only permit what was right and good for him; so, when Job heard all these sad tidings, though he arose and rent his clothes, to show his sorrow, yet he fell down, and worshipped God, to show his submission to His will, and said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

Here is an example for us; an example of patience. We must all

have sorrows and troubles to bear, though perhaps not so many, and so great as Job had. Then, whenever they come upon us, let us pray for Job's patience, and Job's holy trust in God. If we have God for our friend, as Job had, nothing can really hurt us; and we shall feel this, as he did, and be willing to submit to all our trials without murmuring, and to say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good." 1 Sam. iii. 18,

XXIV.

JOB IN TROUBLE.



AGAIN there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. Then God spoke to Satan, as He had done before, and asked him if he had considered His servant Job, who was still faithful, though he had been so tried and so afflicted. But Satan was not satisfied with all the troubles Job had suffered; he wished to vex and afflict him still more; and he told God, that though Job had borne the loss of his possessions patiently, yet, if his body was made to suffer disease and pain, he would then show that he was only a hypocrite after all, and would even curse God to His face. The Lord was pleased, in His wisdom, to allow Job to be still more tried and afflicted, so he said to Satan, "He is in thy hand; but save his life." Then Satan went out, and smote Job with sore boils all over his body.

Job had now to bear pain, as well

as sorrow; yet he was patient and submissive still. And then he had another and a new trial. His wife was living, and she might have comforted Job in his trouble; but instead of encouraging him to trust in God, she advised him to put an end to his own life;—to kill himself. She said, "Curse God, and die." But Job reproved her for speaking so wickedly, and said, "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Job knew that all came from God's hand and by God's permission; and therefore, he was willing to receive whatever happened to him, whether it were good or evil.

When Job's friends came to the place where he was, they looked up, and saw him, but they did not know him. He was not now as he once had been. When they last visited him, he was prosperous and happy, with all his family, and all his possessions, and living in honor and peace, the greatest man in the east.

But now, all was changed. There he sat, alone, among the ashes; his body was covered with a dreadful disease; all his possessions were gone, his children were dead, and he had no one to speak kindly to him, nor to comfort him. The sight made his friends feel sad, and "They lifted up their voice and wept." Then they rent their clothes, and sprinkled dust upon their heads, and sat down with him upon the ground; and for seven days they did not speak a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great. Sometimes, when our friends are in very great trouble, as Job was, it is not well to try to comfort them by words. It is kinder and wiser to feel for them in silence.

XXV.

JOB AND HIS FRIENDS.



AT last, Job began to speak, and to complain bitterly of all his sufferings. He was tempted even to wish he had never been born; and to murmur, and be impatient, and to find fault with God himself, who had so afflicted him.

And did not Job's friends encourage him to trust in God, and submit to His will? No; instead of doing this, they only added to his grief, by unkindly and unjustly accusing him. They told him God never would have afflicted him so much, if he had not been a very wicked man; for they thought that righteous people were always prosperous, and that only the wicked were afflicted; so, when they saw Job in trouble, they said his sufferings were sent as a punishment for his sins, and they advised him to humble himself before God, and ask for pardon.

Job knew that he was a sinner; he knew that he could not trust to his own goodness and righteousness: he said, "How should man be just before God. If I justify

myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me." But Job could not believe that all his troubles were sent to punish him for some particular sin; or, because he had been only pretending to serve God, when he did not really love Him. No; Job felt that he had been sincere; not a hypocrite, as his friends unkindly said he was; and so when they accused him, he answered, "My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go; my heart shall not reproach me as long as I live."

Now Job and his friends were quite right in some things that they said, but in others they were very much mistaken. Job's friends were right in advising him to humble himself before God, and ask for pardon; for afflictions are sent by God to lead His people to do this. But they were quite wrong in accusing Job of being a wicked man, and a hypocrite, because he was afflicted; for God often afflicts most those who love and serve him best,—in love, not in anger; "Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth." *Prov. iii. 12.* And though Job was

right in saying, that he had not brought his sufferings on himself, by his own wickedness and hypocrisy, yet he spoke what was wrong, too; for he almost accused God of unkindness and injustice, in afflicting him after he had so sincerely tried to serve God.

XXVL

E L I H U .

JOB and his friends were not alone when they talked together. A young man was sitting by, and listening to all they said; but he did not speak until they were silent; for they were older than he, and he thought, "Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom." This young man's name was Elihu. Humility and respect made him keep silent so long; but Elihu had much to say, for God had given him great wisdom; and so, when the others left off speaking, he offered to answer Job himself. Elihu was angry with what had been said. He was displeased with Job, because he had justified himself more than God; and he was displeased with his three friends, "because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job."

So Elihu said, "Hearken unto me, I also will show my opinion." Then they all listened, in silence, to what Elihu had to say.

And how did Elihu answer them? First, he reproved Job for justifying himself more than God. Job had said, "I am righteous, and God hath taken away my judgment;" and "it profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God." This was accusing God of

injustice; it was saying, that God had acted wrongly in afflicting a righteous man. But Elihu said, "Far be it from God that He should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should commit iniquity; for the work of a man shall He render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways." Yes;—God is perfectly holy, and perfectly wise; and therefore He will not, He cannot, do anything wrong or unjust; God can never err, never be mistaken. God often, indeed, acts in a way which we cannot understand; He often does things which perplex us, and which seem to us to be for evil, and not for good. But this is because we are ignorant; because we see only a little part of God's doings; because we do not know, as He does, all the past, and all the future; nor see the end from the beginning, as He can. Then, whenever we feel doubtful, and perplexed, and inclined to murmur, like Job, at what God does, let us remember what Elihu said—"God is greater than man; why dost thou strive against Him? for He giveth not account of any of His matters;" and if we feel this, then we shall be willing to trust to His power and goodness, and say, as Abraham did, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right." *Gen. xviii. 25.*

Elihu reminded Job of many things, which might teach him how much greater God was than he. He spoke of the eternity of God. He said, "God is great, and we know Him not, neither can the number of His years be searched out." How can we understand all the greatness of God, when we are ourselves poor, weak creatures, made of dust, and "crushed before the moth?" And then, Elihu spoke of the works of God. He reminded Job of the light, and the thunder, and the clouds, and the rain; and of the wonderful way in which God orders all these things, too wonderful for Job to understand, for "He doeth great things which we cannot comprehend;" and therefore Job was to "stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God."

And now the Lord himself answered Job, and spoke to him out of the whirlwind; and bid him reply to Him, if he could. He said, "I will demand of thee, and answer thou me." And then the Lord asked Job, if he could tell how the earth was made, and if he understood the motion of the stars, or was able to rule the sea, and the light, and the darkness. And God spoke to him of some of the animals which He had created, and of the wonderful instinct which he had given them; He reminded Job

of the goats, and the wild ass, and the peacock, and the ostrich, and the horse. Job had seen all these animals; perhaps he knew much of their habits, and their histories; and he might have known, too, much of the other works of God. But Job could not make one of these things, nor even understand how they were made. He could only notice them, and admire them, and wonder at them; and that was all. And if Job could not understand the works of God, how could he understand God himself? and then how could he dare to contend with Him, or to murmur at anything he did? Job felt all this. He felt humbled and ashamed; and therefore, instead of again trying to justify himself, he said, "Behold I am vile, what shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further."

And when *we* behold the wonderful works of God, we should, like Job, feel our own weakness and sinfulness: and how thankful we should be, that this great Creator is our merciful Father too; "that God is love;" and that He has shown His love by giving "His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." *John iii. 16.*

XXVII.

THE BENEFIT OF AFFLICTION.



OD spoke again to Job out of the whirlwind, that He might make him feel still more his own sinfulness and folly, in trying to justify himself before God. And then, the Lord told Job of other wonderful works of His. He described two great animals, Behemoth and Leviathan, which were so strong and powerful, that even mighty men were afraid of contending with them. How much greater, then, must He be who made them, and how vain and foolish to resist His will!

Then Job answered the Lord, and said, "I know that thou canst do everything. I have uttered what I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." And did God forgive Job? Yes; as soon as Job was humble and penitent, God pardoned, and accepted, and blessed him.

Afterwards, the Lord spoke to Eliphaz, and said, "My wrath is kindled against thee and thy two friends; because ye have not spoken of me that which is right, as my servant Job has." And God commanded them to offer sacrifice for their sin, and to ask Job to pray for them; and they did so, and the Lord accepted Job.

Did Job still remain in sorrow and affliction? No;—"the Lord turned his captivity." He took away his painful disease, and made him well and strong again. He

sent all his friends to comfort him, and to give him presents; and the Lord himself gave Job twice as much as he had before—sheep, and oxen, and camels, and asses; and he had also seven sons, and three daughters. Job lived in comfort and prosperity for many years after, having the blessing of God to make him happy; and at last he died, "old and full of days."

And now what are we to learn from the history of Job? One thing we may learn from him is patience. St. James says, "We count them happy that endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." *James* v. 11. And this teaches us also, the use and benefit of affliction to God's people. "God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." *Lam.* iii. 33. He afflicts in mercy. He would not have allowed Job to be so tried and troubled but for Job's own good and profit. And we are to learn, too, from Job, not to justify ourselves before God. Job's afflictions were sent to teach him this. We should remember how sinful we all are, and how often we offend God; and then when trouble comes, instead of justifying ourselves, we shall confess, that "God has punished us less than our iniquities deserve." *Ps.* ix. 13. And the history teaches us another thing;—how to obtain pardon. When Job and his friends sinned, they were to repent; to humble themselves

before God, to pray to Him, and to offer a sacrifice in faith; and when they did so, they were forgiven and accepted, and so, when we sin, we must repent, and pray for pardon too.

XXVIII.

THE CRUEL KING.



ANY years passed away. Joseph was dead, and all his brothers. A new generation of Israelites now lived in Egypt; they were very many, the country was full of them. A new king was reigning, who did not know Joseph; and he was very cruel, and hated the Israelites, and wished to kill them all. He commanded them to do very hard work in the fields, and in making brick; and their cruel masters beat them, and were very unkind to them. And did they die when the king gave them all this hard work, which made them so weak and tired? No, because God kept them; and therefore nothing could hurt them; they grew and multiplied more and more. And why did God care for them so much? Because He had promised Abraham, many years before, that his children should be like the sand for multitude, and like the stars in the sky, which we cannot count. God never forgets His promises, nor His people who love and serve Him. But God had promised Jacob to bring his children home to Canaan, and now they were far off from their possessions;—had not God forgotten this promise? No: we read that He told Abraham, that his children should go to a strange country, and be afflicted here till the

end of 400 years. God knew the time; soon the 400 years would be over, then the Israelites would be sent home to their own land again.

But Pharaoh, the cruel king, did not know God, and he tried again and again to destroy the Israelites. He commanded every little Israelitish boy that was born, to be thrown into the river and drowned. The poor mothers loved their dear children, and cried bitterly about this cruel, wicked law; but the king had no pity, and many of the little boys were thrown into the river and drowned. But God loved those children; and when they died, He took their souls to be with Him in Heaven.

There was a woman of the family of Levi, who loved God, and her husband too was a good man. God gave them a little boy. The parents loved this dear child, and tried to save him from the cruel king. For three months, the mother hid her child, that he might not be drowned; but when he grew older and larger, she could not hide him any longer. But she knew God could keep her little boy, if she could not, and she told all her sorrow to Him. God can help us when we are in trouble, and he can take care of us, when our dearest friends cannot; and He was pleased now to help this poor woman who trusted

in. Him, and to take care of her little child.

The mother gathered some reeds, and platted them into a little basket or ark; and then she took her dear child, and put him into the ark, and carried him to the river. Did she throw him in? No, she laid him gently among the high grass and reeds, by the side of the river. She could take care of him no more, so she gave him up to God, who alone could keep him; but she left Miriam, her little girl, to watch near her brother. Soon she saw some people coming; who were they? They were ladies; one was the cruel king's daughter, and the others were her maids; and they walked along by the river, for the princess was going to bathe. They did not see Miriam; she was a little way off, but she could see them, and hear all they said. The king's daughter soon saw the ark among the reeds, and she sent her maid to fetch it. The maid ran and took up the ark, and brought it to her mistress, and opened it. Pharaoh's daughter was not like her cruel father; she pitied the poor babe, and said, "It is one of the Hebrew children." When Miriam heard the kind lady speak, she went up to the princess, and said, "Shall I go, and

call a Hebrew woman to nurse the child for thee?" Pharaoh's daughter said, "Go." Then Miriam ran home, and told her mother about the kind lady who wished to save the dear babe: and asked her mother to come and nurse it. Miriam and her mother went back to Pharaoh's daughter, and the kind princess said, "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will pay thee thy wages." The mother brought him home, and nursed him, and he grew; and when he was a little older, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter again. The princess loved the child; and she said, "He shall be my son, and I will name him Moses, (or, drawn out) because I drew him out of the water."

How kind God is to those who love and pray to Him! He heard this mother's prayer, and saved her child from a cruel death. And God loves to save children now. He keeps them when they are in their cradles; He keeps them when they run about, and gives them health, and strength, and all they have. But God likes best, that children's souls should be saved. Jesus says, "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." *Matthew* xviii. 14.

XXIX.

THE BEST RICHES.



PHARAOH'S daughter loved Moses, and she told the wise men of Egypt to teach him all they knew: for she wished Moses to be wise. The Egyptians knew many things, and had much wisdom; but not the best wisdom; they did not know nor worship the true God. They worshipped animals; bulls, and sheep, and dogs, and cats, and crocodiles, and insects. But the Israelites, who lived in Egypt, remembered the God of their fathers, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and the mother of Moses, no doubt, taught him holy things, true wisdom, when he was a very little boy; and she prayed for him, that he might be kept from sin, and that he might love and serve the Lord. And God heard her prayer; and taught Moses by the Holy Spirit, that riches and worldly things could not make him happy, nor save his soul: that God alone could keep him from sin; and that he could be saved only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who should at a future time come down from heaven and die for sinners. Pharaoh's daughter called him her son, and wished to give him great riches; but Moses did not wish to be rich: he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." *Heb. xi. 25.* St. John says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." *1 John ii. 15.* If we love pleasure, or riches, or power, or sin,

more than we love God, we cannot be His children. We must give him all our thoughts, all our affections, all our love. Jesus said to his disciples, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." *Matthew vi. 19, 20.*

When Moses was grown up, he went to visit his brethren the Israelites, who were suffering so much in Egypt. One day he saw an Egyptian cruelly beating an Israelite; they were alone, but God's eye was upon them. God saw the wicked Egyptian, and the poor Israelite, and sent Moses to help his suffering brother. Moses ran to the two men, and saved the Israelite, and killed the Egyptian, and hid the body in the sand. The next day, Moses went out again, and saw two men fighting. Were they Egyptians? No, they were both Israelites. Moses was grieved to see them so wicked: for God's people ought to be kind and gentle; brothers ought to love one another. So Moses went to them, and tried to make peace between them. But the one who did the wrong, would not attend to Moses; and said, "Who sent thee to be a judge? Wilt thou kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian yesterday?" When Moses heard this he was very much afraid, for he thought the people

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THE THREE FATES

knew what he had done; and the king might be angry, and seek to kill him. So Moses fled from Egypt, and went to Midian, and sat down by a well. As he sat there, some young women came to the well to water their sheep; and Moses helped them and drew water for them. When they went home, they told their father how kind Moses had been: their father's name was Jethro; and when he heard about Moses, he sent for him, and gave him food, and asked him to live with him in Midian. Moses did so; and sometime after he married one of Jethro's daughters, who was named Zipporah. Moses had not now the

riches of Egypt, which he had when he lived at the king's house; he was a poor man, keeping Jethro's sheep in the wilderness. But Moses knew that God would take care of him; and he loved God better than all the fine things in Egypt.

But did God forget the Israelites, when Moses was gone? No; He heard them cry, and remembered His promise to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. "God looked upon the children of Israel." We may be sure that God's eye is always upon us: He knows all our sorrows, and sees all our tears, and, in due time, He will comfort and deliver us, if we trust in Him.

XXX.

THE BURNING BUSH.



ONE day, Moses was keeping Jethro's sheep by Mount Horeb. As he sat there quietly and alone, he thought often of his poor brethren suffering in Egypt, and he asked God to help and deliver them. Moses had much faith; he knew that God had power to save the Israelites, and he believed that He would save them at the right time. While Moses was thinking of all this, he saw a bright light shining near him; and he looked up, and saw a bush burning with fire. But the bush was not consumed; it did not wither away; the leaves and branches did not turn black, and crumble to pieces; and Moses wondered very much, and said, "Why is not the bush consumed? I will go and see." So

Moses went to look; but when he came near, he heard a voice out of the bush, saying, "Moses, Moses." Who called him? What made the bush burn, and why was it not consumed? The voice said again, "The place where thou standest is holy ground. I am God; the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." "Then Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."

But the Lord did not come to hurt His servant; He came to comfort him, and to make him and his poor brethren happy. The Lord said, "I have seen my people's sorrow; I have heard their cry. I am come to send thee to Pharaoh: and thou shalt bring my people out of Egypt." But Moses was very much afraid, and said, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" It was

not right of Moses to be afraid when God sent him; he ought to have obeyed directly; but the Lord was very kind and gentle, and He spoke again to comfort Moses. He said, "I will be with thee; tell the people that I send thee. If the king disobey my command, I have power to punish him; and I will send plagues upon Egypt, and bring out my people safely." But Moses was still unwilling to go, and said, "Perhaps the people will not believe me." The Lord then told him to throw his rod upon the ground. Moses obeyed, and it became a serpent; and he fled from it for fear. But the Lord said, "Take it by the tail;" and Moses caught it, and it did not bite nor hurt him, but became a rod again in his hand directly. Then God told Moses to put his hand into his bosom. Moses obeyed, and his hand became covered with leprosy; but God told him to put his hand again into his bosom, and in a moment it was well. Then God told him to go and show these wonders to the people; that they might believe that He had sent him.

Was Moses willing to go to Egypt now? No; he was still afraid, he said, "Lord, I cannot speak well; my tongue is slow, and I have no words." But the Lord said, "Who hath made man's mouth? Who maketh the deaf, and the dumb, and the seeing, and the blind? Have

not I, the Lord? Go; obey my command, and I will teach thee what thou shalt say."

But still Moses wished not to go. Then the Lord began to be angry; for though he is very kind and patient with His people, yet He does not like them to disobey His commands, nor to obey slowly and unwillingly. But the Lord said to Moses, "Aaron thy brother may go with thee; he can speak well; and I will teach you both what you shall do." Then Moses obeyed: he was timid and fearful in himself, but the Lord gave him strength and courage; so he went home, and took leave of Jethro, and called his wife Zipporah, and his two sons, and put them upon an ass, and returned to Egypt. Then God said to Aaron, who was living in Egypt, "Go and meet Moses." So Aaron went into the wilderness, and soon saw Moses and his family coming; and he ran, and kissed him. Moses had much to tell Aaron about the wonders God had shown him; and he asked Aaron to go with him to the king, and command him to send away the Israelites. Aaron was willing to go; so they both went, and called the elders of the Israelites, and told them that God had seen their sorrows, and was going to deliver them. Then they bowed down their heads, and worshipped.

XXXI.

THE FIRST FOUR PLAGUES.



MOSSES and Aaron went together to the king, another Pharaoh, who was now reigning in Egypt, and said, "The Lord commands thee to let the Israelites go." But Pharaoh answered, "I do not know the Lord; and I will not let them go." Then the king told the Israelites' masters to give them more work, and the poor people were not able to finish their hard tasks in making brick; and their cruel masters beat them, and said, "You are idle; fulfil your work, your daily tasks." The Israelites cried to Moses, and Moses went to God, and told Him all his sorrow. God knew all; His eye was upon them, and very soon He would deliver them, and He said, "I have heard their groaning, I remember my covenant with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and I will bring my people to Canaan as I have promised."

Moses was now eighty years old; but he was not weak and feeble, as many old men are; he was strong and powerful. God made him so, because there was much for Moses to do before he died. It is God who gives us all our health and strength; and if we are well and strong we must not be idle. There is much for us all to do; and we must use our health and strength for God. "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." *Ecclesiastes ix. 10.*

God now gave Moses and Aaron power to do wonders, and to work miracles before Pharaoh. They went to the king; and Aaron threw

down his rod before him, and it became a serpent. But Pharaoh called his wise men, and told them to try to do the same; and they did so with their enchantments. Had they power to work miracles? No; perhaps they might have learned to tame serpents, so as to make them look like rods in their hands; and then they might have thrown them down, as Aaron did, and thus pretended to work a miracle. But God made Aaron's rod swallow up their rods. Pharaoh did not care for this, nor did he obey the command to let Israel go; and then God said, He would punish Pharaoh, by turning his river into blood.

The river Nile is very useful in Egypt; no rain falls there to water the ground; but in the summer, the river rises, and overflows the country, and makes the land soft, and then the people sow their seed, and the grass and corn soon spring up. Did Pharaoh and the Egyptians thank God, who gave them the Nile to water their land? No, the Egyptians forgot God; they made their river a god, and worshipped it, and sacrificed to it. But the Nile had no power to make the country fruitful; it was God who made it, and who swelled up its waters, and watered the land; and now He determined to punish and humble the Egyptians, and to turn their river god into blood.

God did as He said. He told Moses to go and stretch his rod over the waters; and as soon as he did so, all became blood. The ponds, and the water in the vessels,

and the beautiful river, all were blood. The fish died; the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river; and their river god could not help them now. Did they repent, and ask God to forgive them? No; and therefore God sent a new punishment upon them. He told Moses again to stretch out his hand over the river; and a very, very great number of frogs came up, and covered all the land. The frogs came into the houses, and beds, and ovens; and wherever the Egyptians went, they found them. Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said, "Intreat God to take away the frogs, and I will obey Him, and let Israel go." So Moses prayed, and God heard his prayer, and made all the frogs die. And did Pharaoh send the Israelites away? No; when the plague was gone, Pharaoh was disobedient again, and he would not attend to what Moses and Aaron said. God was merciful to take away the plague, and He would have forgiven Pharaoh, if he had prayed humbly; but he did not, so

God punished the wicked king again. He told Moses to stretch his rod over the dust, and it became lice upon the people, and upon the animals. The wicked magicians tried to do the same; but they could not, though they had imitated the other miracles; they had no power, and they confessed this, and said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God;" but the king did not attend to them.

The next morning, the Lord sent Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Let the people go; for if thou wilt not, I will send flies upon thee, and upon all thy people; but I will send no flies upon my people, the Israelites." The flies came; and wasps, and biting and stinging insects, very many; but none came to hurt the Israelites. The Egyptians had a god, called the god of flies; but he could not help them now. Then Pharaoh begged again that God would take away the flies, and promised to let Israel go; and God took them away; but still Pharaoh would not obey.

XXXII.

MORE PLAGUES.



WHEN God said to Moses, "Tell Pharaoh, if he will not let the people go, I will to-morrow send a grievous murrain upon all his cattle; upon the horses, and asses, and camels, and oxen, and sheep." And the Lord did so on the morrow; and all the cattle of the Egyptians died, but not one that belonged to the Israelites; and

Pharaoh's heart was hardened still. Then Moses took ashes out of the furnace, and threw them up towards Heaven, at God's command, and they became dust, and brought sore boils, upon men and beasts. The wicked Egyptian magicians suffered from the boils, and could not stand before Pharaoh. But still the king would not attend to God's command.

The next day, God sent very

heavy hail, which broke the trees in pieces, and destroyed all the plants in the field; and the thunder roared in the sky, and the lightning ran along the ground. Pharaoh was very much frightened now; and he sent for Moses and Aaron, and cried, "I have sinned; God is righteous, and I am wicked: intreat God to take away the thunder, and lightning, and hail, and I will let you go." Then Moses went out, and cried to God: and the Lord heard, and took away the fearful storm. What wonderful power God has! He can send storms, and take them away when He pleases; He can kill us with the lightning, or keep us safely. He can take care of us, as He took care of the Israelites in Egypt.

But when the rain was over, Pharaoh was again disobedient, and said, "I will not let the people go." Then God sent locusts, very, very many, to eat all the green things in the land. We have no such locusts here; but in eastern countries they are very common; and they come in great numbers, and eat the trees, and the fruit, and all they can find. The locusts God sent to punish Egypt were very large; and there were so many that the land was darkened by them, and they ate every thing which the hail had not destroyed. The king again sent for Moses and Aaron, and begged them to pray for him. And they did pray, and God heard them; but when the plague was taken away, wicked Pharaoh again said, "I will not let you go." Then God sent a new and very dreadful plague over the land of Egypt; this was thick darkness; there was no light from

the sun, nor moon, nor stars, for three days; and the people could not see to move from their places all that time. It was not common darkness; but a wonderful and fearful darkness sent by God, "a darkness that might be felt."

Were the Israelites in darkness too? No, they had light. God knew who believed in Him, and who did not; and He did not punish His own people. He could make the sun shine brightly upon them, when it was black night with the Egyptians. Pharaoh again called Moses, and said, "You may go; only let your cattle be stayed." But Moses said, "No, we must take all our possessions with us; we will go with our wives, and our little children, our sons, and our daughters, our flocks, and all we have." Then Pharaoh was angry, and drove Moses away, and told him never to come before him again. Moses said, "Thou hast spoken well; I will see thy face again no more;" and he went away from the king.

The darkness ended in three days; and then God said, "I will send one more plague upon Pharaoh, and afterwards he will let the people go. I will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt." And did God kill the first-born of the Israelites too? No: He told them what they must do, if they believed his words, and wished to escape. They were to take a lamb, a lamb without spot or blemish, and to kill it in the evening, and sprinkle the blood upon the lintel, and upon the two doorposts; then they were to roast the lamb, and eat it.

In the night, God sent an angel from Heaven to smite the first-born

of the wicked Egyptians; the eldest child in every house was killed. And all the first-born of cattle. But were the believing, obedient people safe? Yes, the Lord saw the blood upon the doors, and passed over the houses, and did not slay the first-born in them. All those who obeyed God, and sprinkled the lamb's blood upon the posts, were safe.

The Lord Jesus Christ is like the lamb of the Israelites. He is the "Lamb of God," holy and pure; "without blemish and without

spot." 1 Peter i. 29. He was slain as the paschal lamb was, and His blood was shed upon the cross. Why? To save our souls. The lamb of the Israelites saved their bodies from death. The Lamb of God saves our souls from sin. The blood of the lamb in Egypt was sprinkled upon the doors; the blood of Jesus must be sprinkled upon our hearts. The destroying angel saw the blood, and passed over the houses, and when God sees the blood of Jesus upon us, He forgives, and saves us from sin.

XXXIII.

THE DEPARTURE OF THE ISRAELITES.



WHEN the destroying angel flew through Egypt, and came to the palace, and killed Pharaoh's eldest son, the king was very much frightened. He called for Moses and Aaron in the night, and said, "Rise up, you, and the Israelites, and their children, and the flocks, and herds, and be gone." And the Egyptians gave to the Israelites all they asked for; gold, and silver, and clothes; and the Israelites made haste, and took up their things, and put them upon their shoulders, and hurried away to Succoth.

How many were there? 600,000 men, and many women and children, and very much cattle. When Jacob and his family came into Egypt many years before, they were only seventy people. God had blessed and multiplied them very much; their cruel masters in Egypt

could not destroy them, because God had promised to take care of them, and to bring them home to Canaan again. Many hundred years before, God had said to Abraham, "Thy children shall go to a strange country, and be afflicted 400 years, and then I will bring them back to Canaan." And so it was. Jacob and his children went to Egypt; they died; and their children, and their children's children, for many generations, stayed there in sorrow, with cruel kings to reign over them. But God did not forget them. He knew the right time; and when the 400 years were over, then He sent Moses and Aaron, and gave them power to do wonders, and brought away His people in safety. How wonderful and how wise is God! He knows all things, sees all things, does all things. He knows the present, and the past, and the future; and He does all things rightly.

Then let us love, and fear, and trust | for His people everything that is
in this good, and wise, and holy, | good for them.
and powerful God; for He will do |

XXXIV.

PHARAOH DROWNED.



WHEN Moses and the Israelites left Egypt in so much haste, they did not forget Joseph's dying command, but carried his bones with them. Then they went on, and came to the Red Sea. But when Pharaoh heard they were gone, he commanded his servants to bring his chariots, and his horses; and he went with a great army to bring the people back again. He overtook them by the sea; they were all resting in their tents; a pillar of cloud was before them; God gave them this pillar to show them the road by day; and by night, He put before them a pillar of fire to give them light. They were safe under God's keeping. But soon they looked up; and what did they see? Pharaoh and the Egyptians coming after them very quickly, with their chariots and horses. The Israelites cried to the Lord, and said to Moses, "Why hast thou brought us away from Egypt? We shall die, now, here in this wilderness!" They forgot that God was still with them; but Moses said, "Fear not; be still, and the Lord will fight for you." Then the Lord commanded the people to go on. But where could they go? The great sea was before them, and there was no bridge to go over, and no ships to carry them across. What could they do? God

knew; He could find a way for them to escape. The pillar which was before them, moved behind; it stood now between the Israelites and the Egyptians; but the side next the Israelites was bright, to give them light; and the side next the Egyptians, was dark and cloudy, so that they could not see to do the Israelites any hurt all that night. Then God told Moses to stretch his rod over the sea; and the Lord sent a very strong wind to blow back the water; and in the morning, there was a dry road through the sea, and the waters stood like a wall on each side. Who did this wonder? Not Moses, not his rod, not the strong wind alone;—it was God, God who has power to do all things. The Israelites walked through the sea, all of them, on dry ground; not one was drowned, for God held back the waters till they were all gone over safely. Then the Egyptians tried to pursue them, and went in after them; but God looked angrily at them through the pillar, and made them fear, and took off the wheels of their chariots. And then he told Moses to stretch his rod over the sea, and the waters came back again upon Pharaoh, and his army, and his servants, and chariots, and horses, and they were all drowned.

In the morning, the Israelites

saw all their enemies lying dead upon the sea-shore. The Egyptians could hurt them no more now; their bodies were cold and dead, and their souls were gone to be judged by God, whom they had rebelled against, and disbelieved. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." *Hebrews* x. 31.

The Israelites thanked God, and sang praises to Him; and Miriam and the women prayed and danced for joy. Then they went on into the wilderness of Shur. They wandered there three days, and found no water. At last they came to Marah, and there was water; but the water was bitter, and they could not drink it. Then the people were discontented again, and said to Moses, "What shall we drink?" Was this right? No; the Israelites were discontented and unbelieving people. They knew God had power to give them water if He pleased; and they knew that they ought to be patient if He gave them none; He had done many wonderful things for them, and He

could do as many more; but they forgot His kindness, and were impatient, and angry, and discontented. Moses was sorry to find the people doing wrong again so soon. He could not comfort them; he could not make the water good; but he remembered who could, and he cried to the Lord. And did God attend to Moses? Yes; He did not forget His distressed people. Moses "cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

Was there any wonderful power in this tree? No, the power was in God; the tree could do no good without Him. God taught His people how great His power is, because He wished them to trust in Him, and to feel safe and happy in His keeping. We ought all to trust Him. He knows what is best for us; and, if we are His people, we are safe in all places, and may have comfort in all our sorrows.

XXXV.

FOOD IN THE DESERT.



WHEN God sweetened the bitter waters of Marah, He spoke kindly to the Israelites, and said, "If you will obey me, and do what is right, then I will be with you, and keep, and bless, and strengthen you; and I will not send any of those diseases and plagues upon you, which I sent upon the Egyptians." Then they were comforted, and went on to Elim, and there they found twelve wells of water, and many date-palm trees; and they pitched their tents there. They were very glad to see these trees. The fruit is very pleasant and refreshing to poor tired wanderers in the wilderness; the trees on which it grows can live in these hot places, and water is always found near the date trees.

When the Israelites went away from Elim, they came into another wilderness, the Desert of Sin. Then they began to be discontented; and they murmured again, and said, "We shall die of hunger, for there is no food here. When we were in Egypt, we had plenty; but now, we have nothing; why did you bring us here?" How unthankful these people were! God had delivered them from their cruel masters, and brought them safely through the sea; and he had given them sweet water to drink, and promised always to take care of them; and yet they would not trust Him.

Moses went again to God, and told Him all his sorrows, and all that the people said. Then God

answered, "I have heard their murmurings; go, and tell them, I will give them flesh to-night to eat; and in the morning I will give them bread." Where could they find flesh? Must they kill all their flocks and herds? No; God sent them some birds called quails, which came in great numbers, and covered the tents; and the Israelites caught, and killed, and ate them in the evening. And was this all God gave them? No; in the morning, when the dew was gone, the Israelites saw the ground covered with a little round thing, white like frost. It was new to all the people, and they came out and looked, and wondered, and asked, "What is it?" Nobody knew; but Moses said, "This is the bread God has given you to eat." How wonderful was this! God sent this sweet bread to feed His people in the wilderness, when there was no corn for them to eat.

The Israelites called the new food which God sent, Manna; it was sweet and nice, like honey. Moses said, "You must gather the manna fresh every morning. God promises to send it every day; but you must not keep it till the next morning. Every one of you must gather an omer full; but the day before the Sabbath, you must gather two omers full, and keep one of them for the Sabbath; for God will send no manna on the Sabbath day." Some of the people would not believe Moses; they determined to try, and keep the manna till the morrow, and see if it would be

good. But, in the morning, when the people looked at the manna they had kept, they found that it was full of worms, and smelt badly; they could not eat it, but threw it away. And did not the manna saved for the Sabbath become bad? No; because God kept it good; He did not wish His Holy Sabbath to be broken, and He had power to keep the manna fresh and sweet if He pleased. But there were some more disobedient people who would not believe Moses, nor attend to God's command. They went out on the Sabbath day to gather manna. Did they find it? No: God did not send any, and they went home again empty; and God was angry with them for their disobedience.

The Sabbath is not a day on which we ought to do any work. It is God's day; He kindly gave it

to us, that we might have more time to attend to our souls, and to think of God, and death, and judgment, and heaven, and hell. We should not think much of our food on this holy day; we should prepare it the day before, as God told the Israelites to do. We have our food from God, as they had. It is not rained down from heaven, because God does not now work miracles; and we live in a country where there is plenty of corn to make bread. But God sends down rain from heaven to make the corn grow, and he makes the sun shine to ripen it. He alone can cause the grass to spring up, and give food to the beasts of the field. We must pray, "Give us day by day our daily bread." *Luke xi. 3.* And when we eat it, we must thank God who gave it, and not wish for more nor better food than He sends.

XXXVI.

R E P H I D I M .



HE Israelites now went on, through the wilderness of Sin, to Rephidim. How did they know the way? God went before them in the pillar of cloud by day and in the pillar of fire by night. When the pillar stopped, they stopped; and when the pillar moved, they moved, and followed it wherever it went. While we live, we are like the Israelites, travelling in the wilderness; but, if we are God's people, we need not fear, because He is always by us. He does not go before us in a pillar of cloud and

fire; but His hand is always over us to guide and keep us, and His eye sees us wherever we are. We must pray God to lead us in the right way, in the way to Heaven.

There was no water at Rephidim; and the people murmured again, and were very angry with Moses, and very unthankful to God. Then Moses cried to God, and He heard the prayer. God told him to go to Mount Horeb, and strike the rock; and He promised that then water should come out. Moses obeyed God, and struck the rock, and water came out. It was God's power that

did this miracle; not Moses, nor the rod, but God alone, could bring water out of the rock.

There were some wicked people, who lived not far from this wilderness, called Amalekites, and now they came to fight with Israel, in Rephidim. Moses called Joshua his servant, and said to him, "Choose men, and go and fight with the Amalekites; and I will go up to the top of the mountain, with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua and the soldiers went to fight; and Moses and Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. What did they do there? Moses held up his hand, with the rod of God in it, and prayed God to give

the Israelites power to conquer their enemies. God heard Moses pray, and put strength into the soldiers' hands, and gave them power over their enemies. But Moses was tired of holding up his hands; they were heavy, and fell down, and then the Amalekites became strong, and the Israelites became weak. But Aaron and Hur took a large stone, and put it under Moses, and he sat upon it; and Aaron and Hur held up his hands all the day till the sun went down. And God blessed the Israelitish soldiers; they conquered their enemies, and drove all the wicked Amalekites away.

 XXXVII.

JETHRO'S VISIT.



OME time before Moses and the Israelites went out of Egypt, Moses had sent home his wife Ziporah, and his two sons to Jethro, in Midian. They had not seen all the wonderful things God had done for His people in Egypt, and at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness. But when Jethro heard of all these wonders, he called Ziporah and her two sons, and they all went together to meet the Israelites in the wilderness. Moses was glad to see his family again; and he kissed them, and brought them into the tent, and talked with them. Moses had much to say; he told them of all God had done to the wicked Egyptians; of the ten plagues He had sent; of His mercy

to the Israelites, when He destroyed the first-born; of the lamb's blood sprinkled upon the doors, which saved those who believed. Then Moses told them about the Red Sea, and how the Israelites passed through on dry ground; and about the destruction of the Egyptians, and the safety of God's people in the wilderness. He showed them the pillar which guided, and the manna which fed the Israelites every day. Jethro was glad to hear all this; and he blessed and praised God, who had done these great and wonderful things.

In the morning, Jethro went with Moses to the place where he judged the people. Moses was not idle: he had much to do. All the people came to him, to tell him

their wants and their sorrows, and to ask his advice. And Moses heard them all patiently, and talked kindly to them, and told them what they ought to do, and what they ought not to do. All day, Moses sat to judge the people; he was tired and weary, but not impatient; no, he was glad to be useful to God's people, and did not think about his own comfort. Moses was not selfish. But when Jethro saw him so tired, and weary, he said to him,

"It is not right for thee to judge the people alone; choose some men to help thee. Thou shalt teach the people the holy law of God, and His words and commands; but let the other men help thee, to judge in little things." So Moses did as Jethro said, and chose some good and wise men to help him in his work. Then Jethro took leave of Moses, and Zipporah, and her sons, and went home to Midian.

XXXVIII.

MOUNT SINAI.



THE Israelites now came into the wilderness of Sinai, and pitched their tents before the mountain. Moses went up into the mountain, and God talked to him there. God said, "Go, and tell the Israelites what wonderful things I have done for them, in saving them from the Egyptians, and bringing them here. They are my own people; and if they will love and obey me, I will keep them always, and give them all they want; and they shall be my children, and I will be their Father." Moses told the people what God said, and they all answered, "We will obey the Lord." Then God said again to Moses, "Go, and tell the people to make themselves ready for the third day: for then I will come down upon the mountain to speak to them. They shall not go up, nor touch the mountain; whoever touches it shall be put to death. When the trumpet sounds, they

shall come up to the mount." The people obeyed; they all washed their clothes, and made themselves ready for the third day. Why? Because God was coming, the holy God; the people were to remember how great and wonderful He is, and how weak and sinful they were: and to come before God with reverence.

In the morning, the Israelites looked towards the mountain; a thick black cloud was over it; and fire, and smoke, and lightning came out of the mountain, and all the ground shook. The people were very much frightened; but the trumpet sounded, and then Moses brought them all out, and made them stand round the mountain. The trumpet sounded louder and louder, and Moses spoke, and God's voice answered him. Then the Lord came down on Mount Sinai, and called Moses; and Moses went up. God said, "Tell the people again, not to touch the mountain;

but thou shalt come up, and Aaron with thee." Then Moses went down, and told them.

It was a very fearful thing to see the great mountain smoking, and the fire and lightning coming out of the thick black darkness. Why was it so fearful? Because God was there; the holy, powerful God; God who cannot look upon sin, and who has power to punish all those who disobey Him. "Our God is a consuming fire." *Hebrews* xii. 29.

The Israelites trembled before Him; and we must tremble too, if we have not been washed from our sins in the blood of Jesus. We have no power to escape; we cannot save ourselves from the anger of a holy God; but if we believe in Jesus, we are safe. We need not fear then, because God promises to accept all those who come to Jesus alone for salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." *Acts* xvi. 31.

XXXIX.

THE FIRST FOUR COMMANDMENTS.



THEN Moses and all the people stood round the mountain. They did not see God, but they heard His voice speaking to them. He said, "I am the Lord who brought thee out of the land of Egypt: thou shalt have no other gods but me." There is only one true God; He is eternal; without beginning, without end. He is everywhere; He sees all we do; and He knows all things, past, present and future. He knows even our thoughts; we cannot hide anything from Him. And He is a holy God; He hates sin, and He says, that all whose sins are not washed away, must perish: because sin cannot be with Him in heaven. But He is a very kind and merciful God too; He is a father to us all: He made us, and keeps us, wherever we are, and gives us all we have. But the best gift of God is the gift of His dear Son to die for us; to bear the punishment of our sins;

to cleanse us from our iniquities in His blood, that, if we believe in Jesus, we may have eternal life. And God gives us another gift; His Holy Spirit, to come into our hearts, to make us holy. We are commanded to love and worship this powerful and holy God: God the Father, Son, and Spirit; three persons in one God. We must love Him better than all the world; for if we love anything better than God, we make an idol of that thing. Some people love riches, and make money their idol; some love pleasure, and make the amusements of the world their idols; and many, very many, poor ignorant people, in countries where the true God is not known, love and worship images of wood and stone, which cannot help nor save them. We must thank God, who has given us the Bible to teach us about Him; and pray to Him to help us to love and serve Him with all our hearts; and ask Him to send Missionaries to heathen

lands, to teach poor idolaters to love Him too.

The Second Commandment says, "Thou shalt not make any graven images; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them." It is wrong to try to make any likeness or picture of God; He is too holy, too wonderful for us; we cannot tell what He is; He is not like man; He is a Spirit, and when we worship Him, we must worship Him in spirit, and remember what a great and holy God He is. He has said in His holy Word, "To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?" "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for He is holy."

The Third Commandment says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." To take God's name in vain, is to dishonor Him, and not to respect His word, and His house, and His day. We must be serious and thoughtful when we read the Bible; it is God's book, and we ought to honor and love it very much. And when we go to church, we must remember it is God's house, a holy place, and therefore we must not idly look

about, nor think of worldly things. And when we kneel down to pray, we must remember that we are speaking to God, to the holy God, who will not hear us if we do not pray with our hearts. And on God's day, we must not do our own pleasure, nor business; but give our time to God, and pray to Him, and read His word, because all is holy that belongs to God.

The Fourth Commandment says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." When God had made all things, He rested on the seventh day, and blessed it, and made it holy, and commanded us to keep it holy. No work must be done on the Sabbath; all must be finished the day before. The Israelites were commanded not to go out and look for manna on the Sabbath morning, and God sent none on that day. But Sunday ought to be a very happy day to us, because holy things are much better and pleasanter than the things of the world; and the Bible is better than any other book. It is pleasant to go to church, where the Bible is read and preached, and where all God's people love to praise and pray to Him together.

XL

THE LAST SIX COMMANDMENTS.



THE Fifth Commandment says, "Honor thy father and thy mother." Parents take great care of their children when they are little. Children then must love these kind parents, and obey them in all things. They should do what their fathers or mothers tell them to do; and must be very kind and affectionate to them. And when the parents grow sick or old, the children must nurse and take care of them, and do all they can to comfort and make them happy.

The Sixth Commandment is, "Thou shalt do no murder." Cain was the first murderer; he killed his brother, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. God commands all murderers to be put to death. They are brought before the judge, and condemned, and executed; and their souls go before God to be judged at His throne. But St. John says, "He that *hateth* his brother is a murderer." 1. *John* iii. 15. Anger, and hatred, and passion, are like murder; people begin by being angry and passionate, and then, perhaps, they may strike and kill. We must pray God to take away our wicked passions, and to make us gentle, and kind, and forgiving.

The Seventh Commandment says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." This speaks to husbands and wives, and tells them to love one another, and to live together in peace. Wives must obey their husbands, and try to do all they wish, and never to

make them angry or unhappy. And husbands must love their wives, and take care of them, and be very kind and gentle to them. Husbands and wives must love, and fear, and worship God together, and teach their families to do so too.

The Eighth Commandment is, "Thou shalt not steal." We read in the Bible about many people who stole; and we hear now, very often, of wicked thieves and robbers. But God's eye is upon thieves and liars. He sees men, and women, and little children too, when they steal; if they do it sily, or in the dark, He can see them; and if their wickedness is not known now, it will all be known in the day of judgment, when the book of remembrance will be opened and read. It will be very dreadful then to be punished by God, and sent away far from Him and Heaven for ever. We should pray God to help us always to remember that His eye is upon us; and ask Him to keep us from taking anything not our own. Many children have begun by taking little things, and grown up to be thieves. It is better to die of hunger than to steal.

The Ninth Commandment is, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." This teaches us not to tell lies, nor deceive, nor say what is not true. God says that all liars shall be sent to hell. He knows the truth, and we cannot deceive Him. And this commandment, too, teaches us not to accuse others falsely, nor to tell tales of them which are not true.

The Tenth Commandment is, "Thou shalt not covet." It is wrong to wish for what belongs to other people. God has given us what is best for us, and we must not desire more. He gives riches to some people, and not to others. Why? We cannot tell; but we know that God is wise, and does all rightly; and we should remember, that it is He who gives us everything we have. If others have more, we must not envy them, nor wish for

their money, nor for anything that belongs to them. Coveting is often the beginning of stealing. People see a thing, then they desire it, and perhaps, if God's grace does not keep them from sin, they at last steal it. We must pray God to give us contentment, that we may not displease Him by sinful wishes; for he knows all our thoughts, as well as our actions; He sees our hearts; and our secret sins we cannot hide from Him.

XLI.

THE LAW.



WHEN the Israelites saw the lightning, and the blackness of the mountain, and heard the thunders, and the loud trumpet, they were very much afraid, and moved away from the mountain, and stood afar off. They said to Moses, "Speak thou to us, and we will hear; but let not God speak to us, lest we die." But Moses said, "Fear not; God is come to prove you, and to tell you what you ought to do, that you may learn to know and serve Him aright, that His blessing may be upon you." We are all poor helpless sinners before God; our own obedience cannot take us to Heaven, for we have disobeyed God many times. How then can we go to heaven? Jesus Christ alone can take us there. He bore the punishment of our sins upon the cross, and His blood can cleanse us; He was perfectly holy, He kept all the commandments; and, if we believe in Him, God will accept us for His righteousness' sake. But we

must try to be like Jesus: we must wish and strive to be holy. We must ask Him for all these things, that we may be made His own dear children by faith in Christ Jesus. And then we need not fear; because God has promised to save all who believe; and we shall not tremble at the day of judgment, when we stand before His throne, because, if our sins have all been washed away in Jesus' blood, and our hearts made new and clean by the Holy Spirit, we shall hear our Saviour say, "Come, ye blessed;" and we shall be taken up to heaven, away from sin and sorrow for ever.

When God had finished speaking, Moses came and told the people all He had said, and they answered, "We will obey the Lord; we will do what He commands us." Then Moses wrote all the words of God: and the Israelites offered sacrifices unto the Lord. Moses read the book of the law to the people, and they said again, "All that the Lord

hath said, we will do, and be obedient." Then Moses and Aaron, and some of the elders of Israel, went up towards the mountain, and there they saw an appearance of the bright glory of God; but this could not hurt them, because God kept

them safely; and they stayed there before Him, and did eat and drink. Then God told Moses alone to come up to Him, to receive the tables of stone upon which God had written the Ten Commandments.

 XLII.

THE GOLDEN CALF.



MOSES waited six days upon the mountain, with Joshua his servant; and then God called to him out of the cloud, and Moses went up, and was there in the mount forty days and forty nights. Moses was not afraid to be with God, because He was his father and his friend. We have no need to fear, when our sins are forgiven, and when we are at peace with God through Jesus Christ.

What did God say to Moses when he was in the mountain? He gave him many directions about the tabernacle which the Israelites were to make, where God was to be worshipped; and about the sacrifices, and priests, and the holy things which we shall soon read about; and then He gave Moses the two tables of stone, written with the finger of God. The people waited a long time for Moses, and wondered he did not come down to them, and then they began to be tired and impatient, and they went to Aaron and said, "Moses is gone away; we do not know what is become of him; make gods for us, and they shall go before us." Did Aaron tell them how wicked and

disobedient they were? No; Aaron sinned too, and let the people sin. He told them to give him their golden earrings which were in their ears; so they brought them to Aaron, and he made them into a golden calf. Then the people said, "These be the gods who brought us up from Egypt;" and Aaron built an altar, and offered sacrifices to the calf, and made a feast; and the people ate and drank, and played before the image. They had soon forgotten the holy command of God, which He spoke to them from the mount, "Thou shalt not make any graven image." They had forgotten their own promise, which they made to Moses, "We will obey the Lord." They had forgotten to ask God's help to teach them to serve Him. But did not God see? Was not He angry? Yes; He saw all; for His eyes are in every place; He knew when He was talking to His servant Moses, what His disobedient people were doing; and He said to Moses, "Go down; the people have forgotten me, and they have made a golden calf, and worship it. I am angry with these disobedient people; I will destroy them; but I will keep thee, and make of thee a great

nation." But Moses prayed God to forgive these sinful people, and to remember His servants Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and His promises to them. Then God heard Moses' prayer, and did not destroy them all.

So Moses took the tables in his hands, and went down again to Joshua. Joshua said, "There is a noise in the camp;" but he did not know what the noise was. Moses listened, and said, "It is a singing that I hear;" and when they came near, they saw the golden calf, and the people playing, and dancing, and singing before it. Then Moses

was angry, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and broke them under the mountain. Why was he angry? To see that these people had so soon forgotten their kind God, and their own promise to love and serve Him. They were helpless sinners, and we are so too. When we trust to our own strength and goodness, and forget to ask for the Holy Spirit to help and teach us, we are as forgetful of God, as unthankful, and as wicked as these Israelites were. Let us pray to God every day to keep us from sin, and to enable us to live always in His fear and love.

XLIII.

THE IDOLATORS PUNISHED.



WHEN Moses saw Aaron, he asked him why he had done this great sin. Aaron did not humbly confess his own wickedness, but tried to excuse himself, and said, "The people gave me their gold, and told me to make gods for them; and I cast the gold into the fire, and there came out this calf." But Moses took the calf and burnt it, and ground it into powder; then he sprinkled the powder upon water, and made the wicked idolators drink it. Moses was sorry to punish these sinful men; but he knew it was right, because God commanded him; so he cried to all the people, and said, "Who is on the Lord's side?" Then the tribe of Levites came to Moses, and said, they were. And what did Moses command them to do? He gave them a very fear-

ful command, but one which must be obeyed; he said, "Take your swords, and go through the camp, and kill these wicked idolators; your brothers, and companions, and neighbors; spare them not, they must all die." Then the Levites went, and did as Moses commanded; and 3000 men were killed that day.

Then Moses spoke gently to the rest of the people; for he loved them, and wished them to be forgiven, that God might bless them again. Moses said, "You have sinned a great sin; you have made God very angry; but I will now go up to Him, and ask Him to forgive you; perhaps He will hear my prayer." Then Moses went up, and prayed, and cried to God, and said. "O Lord, these people have sinned a great sin; but now, I pray thee, forgive them, and blot out their sin."

And did God forgive? Yes; God is always willing to hear prayer; always ready to forgive. He told Moses to go down, and lead the people on their journey towards Canaan, and he promised to guide them as he had done before. Then the Lord told Moses to come up again into the mountain, and to bring with him two tables of stone, like the first tables which he broke. Moses obeyed, and went up to Mount Sinai very early in the morning; and God came down in a cloud, and stood near him, and talked to him. Moses could not see the bright glory of the Lord; no living man can see that; but in Heaven we shall see Him face to face, and behold His glory for ever.

God passed by Moses, as he stood on the mountain, and spoke with a

loud voice. What did he say? He told Moses, what a good, and kind, and gracious God He is; a God who loves to forgive, and who saves all who come to Him in faith; but a very holy God too; a God that cannot look on sin, and who punishes all those who will not repent and turn to Him. When Moses heard God speak, he fell down, and worshipped; and asked that great and holy God to forgive his sins, and the sins of the Israelites, and to make them His own people, and to keep and save them for ever. And did God hear the prayer? Yes, He promised to keep the Israelites still; and to give them the good land of Canaan, if they would obey and serve Him, and no more make and worship the idols which the people around them served and worshipped.

 XLIV.

THE NEW TABLES.



MOSES staid in the mountain again forty days; he neither ate nor drank, but God had power to keep him without food:

and Moses was happy with his God, and loved to be there. God gave him many commands about what the people must do, and what they must not do; and He wrote again the ten commandments upon the new tables. When God had finished speaking, Moses came down from the mountain; and the people looked at him, and saw that his face was bright and shining; and they feared to come near to him. What made Moses' face shine? The bright glory

of God, which rested upon him while He talked to him in the mountain. When Moses saw that it was painful for the people to look at him, he took a veil, and covered his face, and then spoke to them; but when Moses spoke to God, he put off the veil.

Moses told the people all the commands of God, and showed them the new tables; and he spoke to them about the Sabbath, the holy day of God, when they must do no work, because it is a day of rest, holy to the Lord. Then he told them about the tabernacle which God commanded them to make, where they were to worship Him;

and Moses asked them to bring their gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and the skins of animals, and beautiful stones; these things were to help to make the tabernacle, and all which was to be in it. The people were glad to bring their riches for the service of God; and many of them were very busy and industrious in this good work. The women spun hair for the curtains, and the men worked the stones, and the gold, and silver; all tried to do something. There was a man named Bezaleel, who was very wise in many curious works, in cutting stones and carving wood. This man loved God, and he was very glad he could do something in his service. He made all the things for the tabernacle, and taught other men to help him, that the work might be done quicker.

It is very pleasant, as well as right, to work for God. All have talents; all can do something. Some people are very wise and learned; they can do much. They can teach others; and they ought to teach

them the things of God, to love and serve Him, for that alone is true wisdom. Good ministers work for God, in His church, by preaching and teaching the Gospel, as Bezaleel worked for God in making the tabernacle for His worship. Women can do something: there is no tabernacle to work for now; but they can do much for the poor, by clothing and caring for them; and this is working for God, because He commands us to remember the poor, and to be kind to them for His sake. Little children, too, can do something. Perhaps the Israelitish children helped their mothers to spin the goats' hair, and to carry to their fathers the stones and wood which were wanted. Children cannot do much, but they may be very useful in helping others; and if they work always in the fear of God, and try to serve Him in all they do, He will love and bless them. None should be idle: remember, St. Paul tells us not to be "slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." *Romans xii. 11.*

 XLV.

THE TABERNACLE.



HE tabernacle was made of boards, with bars put across; and these boards and bars were made of shittim wood covered with gold. At the entrance, there were no boards, but five pillars of shittim wood covered with gold. Within the tabernacle, under the upper end, were four more pillars; a beautiful covering, called the vail, was hung

over them; and this hid the inside, which was the most holy place, "the Holy of Holies." None could go in there but the High Priest; and he went only once a year. In the Holy of Holies was placed the ark. The ark was a chest or box made of shittim wood, covered with gold; and there were rings in the sides, for poles to be put in when the ark was moved. The top of the ark was



THE ARK AND MERCY SEAT

called the Mercy-seat; two golden angels, called Cherubim, were placed one on each side the Mercy-seat; they looked over it, and their wings covered the top. In the ark were afterwards kept the tables of the commandments, Aaron's rod, and a golden pot full of manna, which God commanded to be put there. Outside the vail, was the altar on which incense was burnt, the table on which the holy bread, called shew-bread, was placed, and the great gold candlestick. The tabernacle stood in a large open court; pillars of brass surrounded it, and curtains were hung upon them. The brazen altar for burnt offerings, and the great laver where the priests washed, stood in this court. There were coverings and curtains to the tabernacle and court. Over the boards of the tabernacle was thrown a covering of fine linen beautifully worked in scarlet, and purple, and blue; over the linen, was a covering of goats' hair; over this, a covering of rams' skins dyed red; and another covering of thick skins over all. The people were not allowed to go into the tabernacle: but the priests went in every morning to offer incense, and every evening to light the lamps; and on the Sabbath, to take away the old shew-bread from the table, and to put on new. The sacrifices were offered in the court, where the people stood.

This was the beautiful tabernacle which God taught Moses to make for His worship. The things in it were likenesses, or types, of better and holy things. The Holy of Holies was a type of Heaven, that holy place which we cannot now see; and the ark there, with the bright glory shining above it, was

a type of Christ. He is now in Heaven, and the holy angels stand before him, like the Cherubim over the ark. When the High Priest went into the most Holy Place, he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice before the Mercy-seat. Jesus is our High Priest, and he offered a sacrifice for our sins before he went into Heaven. What sacrifice did He offer? He offered himself; He died upon the cross, and there poured out His blood, and bore the punishment of our sins. And now like the Israelitish High Priest, He is gone into the Holy Place, not into the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle, but into Heaven of which that was the type; and there He pleads for us before the Mercy-seat, the throne of God.

When all was finished, God commanded Moses to set up the tabernacle. Then Moses put up the boards and bars, and threw the covering over; and took the ark and put it into the Holy Place, within the vail; then he placed the table outside, and put the bread upon it; and near the table he placed the candlestick, and lighted up the lamps. He put the golden altar before the vail, and burnt sweet incense upon it; but the altar of burnt offering, and the laver, he put in the court outside. Then Moses and Aaron washed at the laver: and the hangings were put up, and all was finished. A cloud covered the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord filled it. The cloud was always there by day, and fire by night. When the cloud was taken up, the people journeyed; and when it staid upon the tabernacle, then they rested in their tents.

XLVI.

THE PRIESTS' GARMENTS.



WHEN the people were still at Sinai, after the tabernacle was set up, God spoke again to Moses, and gave him many commands about his worship and service. God commanded that Aaron and his sons should be His priests or ministers. They were brought into the tabernacle, and there consecrated for the holy work. So now, ministers of the gospel are ordained and set apart, before they begin to teach and preach to the people. It is a holy office, and ministers ought to think much about it, and to pray to God for His help and blessing; and the people ought to pray, too, that God would give holy wisdom and power to His ministers, and make them faithful teachers of His word. All the Israelites stood at the door of the court of the tabernacle; and Moses brought Aaron and his sons to the great laver, and there washed them with water. The water in the laver had power only to wash their bodies; but it was a type of the blood which cleanseth from sin, and of the Spirit which sanctifies, or makes holy. Ministers should be washed in the blood of Christ, and have their hearts made clean by the Holy Spirit.

Then Moses put upon Aaron the holy garments which God commanded to be made; the coat, the girdle, the robe, the ephod, the breastplate, and the mitre. The coat was a long linen robe, with sleeves, and with a girdle worked in

blue, and purple, and scarlet. The robe was a long, blue, linen gown, without sleeves; round the bottom were golden bells, and figures of pomegranates; the bells sounded when the High Priest went into the Holy Place. The ephod was a short robe, worked in blue, and purple, and scarlet and gold; it was made of linen, and round it was worn a beautiful girdle worked like the ephod. The breastplate was made of cloth and was very thick. It had four rings of gold to join it to the ephod; twelve beautiful stones were set in the breastplate, three in a row; there were four rows of stones, and every stone had the name of one of the tribes of Israel written or cut upon it. The tribes of Israel were the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob. These stones in the breastplate were called Urim and Thummim, that is, very light, perfect and beautiful things. Aaron wore the breastplate upon his heart when he went into the Holy Place, because he was to remember the people there, and pray for them to the Lord.

The mitre was a linen turban, and in the front of it was a plate of gold, on which was written, "Holiness to the Lord;" because the priests, the ministers of the Lord, must be holy in all they do and say, wherever they are. Aaron's sons did not wear all the beautiful robes which their father wore. Only the High Priest had the ephod, and breastplate, and robe, and mitre. But Moses put upon the other

priests the coat, and the girdle, and the bonnet or turban. All these holy and beautiful garments were put upon Aaron and his sons, to teach them how holy they ought to be, if they were honored to be priests and ministers of the Lord.

All God's ministers, and all God's people, must be so too; they must have on Christ's righteousness, and be renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, or they cannot enter into Heaven.

 XLVII.

THE PRIESTS.



WHEN Moses had clothed Aaron and his sons with the priestly garments, he took oil, and sprinkled it upon the altar, and the laver, and upon everything in the tabernacle. Then he poured the oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him. The oil was a type of the influence of the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies the ministers of the Lord, and prepares them for their holy work. Afterwards, a bullock was brought; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon it, humbly confessing their sinfulness before God, and acknowledging that they wanted to be washed from their iniquity, and needed to have a sacrifice offered for them. Then the bullock was killed, and Moses took the blood, and sprinkled the altar, and poured it out beneath. Then a ram was brought; and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon its head; and it was slain, and the blood sprinkled upon the altar. Another ram was brought; and again Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon its head, then it was killed, and Moses took the blood, and put it on Aaron's right ear, and on the thumb

of his right hand, and on the great toe of his right foot; and Moses did so to Aaron's sons too. Then Moses took bread out of a basket, and oiled cakes, and the fat of the sacrifice, and gave all to Aaron and to his sons, to be presented to the Lord; afterwards Moses took them from them again, and burnt all upon the altar, as an offering to the Lord. Then Moses took the oil and the blood, and sprinkled them upon Aaron and his sons, to sanctify them. The oil was a type of the sanctifying power of God's Holy Spirit in the heart; and the blood was a type of the blood of Jesus, which cleanseth from all sin.

Aaron and his sons were sinners, as we all are; they needed to have their sins washed away, and their hearts renewed; they needed a sacrifice, as well as the people; and they were taught that the rams, and lambs, and bullocks had no power to take away sin, but that they must look in faith to the great sacrifice which should, at a future time, be offered up for the sins of all the world. The priests of Israel soon died, and passed away; but our High Priest continues for ever. He

does not, as they did, offer sacrifices daily for sin; one sacrifice was enough, when He offered up Himself on the cross; but He still lives; He lives in Heaven, in the holy place, and there makes intercession for us.

 XLVIII.

THE SACRIFICES AND FEASTS.



VERY soon after Aaron and his sons had been consecrated, they began their holy work. God's ministers and people must not be idle; all have something to do for God, and it should be begun directly. The work of the priests was to offer the sacrifices, and attend to the holy services of God in the tabernacle. The sacrifice of a lamb was offered every morning and every evening. This teaches us, that we need to have our sins washed away every day we live; when we rise in the morning, and when we go to bed at night, we ought to pray for grace and pardon, and for every blessing which we want. We should thank God for all He has given us, and ask Him still to give us that which He sees right we should have. This was what the Israelites were taught to do; and if they prayed in faith, God heard their prayer, and gave them His blessing.

On the Sabbath day, two more lambs were offered, besides the morning and evening sacrifices. We should love to worship God every day: but we should pray to Him, and think about Him, more on Sunday than on other days. The Sabbath is a day of holy rest; it belongs to God, and it must all be spent in His service. The Israelites were not allowed to do any work on

God's holy day; and we should try to be like them, and be very thankful that God has given us a Sabbath, on which we may learn to know and serve Him better.

In the beginning of every month, more sacrifices were to be offered; two bullocks, one ram, seven lambs, and a kid. Besides all these sacrifices, there were holy days and feasts, which God commanded to be kept.

There were three feasts in the year, when God commanded all the men of Israel to appear before Him. *First*, the feast of the Passover, in remembrance of the angel passing over the houses of the Israelites, when he destroyed the first-born of Egypt. They were to take a lamb, and eat it as they did in Egypt; and to offer sacrifices, and to keep seven days holy to the Lord. This feast was in the spring of the year. The paschal lamb was a type of Jesus Christ slain for our sins, to save our souls from destruction.

Second, The feast of weeks, or Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover. This feast was in the summer, when the corn was reaped; and the people were then to give some of their fruits as a thank-offering to the Lord. It is God who gives us all our blessings, and we must thank and praise Him for them. The Israelites in the feast of weeks, were to remember that solemn time

when God gave them the law from Sinai, fifty days after they went from Egypt. It was on the feast of Pentecost, that the disciples of Jesus, many years after, met at Jerusalem, when the Holy Ghost came upon them, and gave them power to speak different languages.

Third, In the autumn, the Israelites were commanded to keep another holy time. The feast began by the blowing of trumpets, to call the people to attend. A few days after, was the great day of Atonement. Then they were to remember their sins, and repent, and be sorry for them. No work might be done; and sacrifices were to be offered, bulls, and goats, and lambs, to teach the people that their sins must be washed away in the blood of the Great Sacrifice, to whom they must, in faith, look for salvation. And there are days when we should remember our sins, and pray for forgiveness too. Every day we ought to do so, but some days more particularly. The beginning of the year, and our own birthdays, are very solemn times; when we should remember our past sins, and pray

earnestly to God to wash them all away in the blood of Jesus, and to give us grace to love and serve Him better for the future.

Five days after the day of Atonement, God commanded the Israelites to keep the feast of Tabernacles. This was a time of joy for seven days. The Israelites were to gather branches from the trees, palm trees, and willow trees, and to make booths to live in, seven days. The women and children staid at their own houses; but the men dwelt in the booths, praising and thanking God, till the seven days were ended; and then they went home again to their families. The booths were not their homes; they lived in them only a short time. The Israelites were taught by this to remember the time when they lived in tents in the wilderness; and to thank God, in their pleasant houses in Canaan, for having brought them safely home. The home of God's people is above, in the Heavenly Canaan; there they will live for ever, and go out no more into a world of pain, and sin, and sorrow.

XLIX.

THE JUBILEE.



OD commanded the Israelites, when they should be safe in Canaan, not to sow their lands every seventh year. The land was to rest that year: they must not plough, nor dig, nor sow, nor dress their vineyards. What would they do for food? They must trust in God; He could make the land fruitful without their care; and He promised to keep them, and give them all they wanted. The fruits ripened, and the corn came up; and then they gathered, and ate, and had plenty. But they were not to be selfish: they were not to keep the good things which God gave them to themselves: no, they were to divide them among themselves, and their servants, and the poor who had no possessions of their own.

Every fiftieth year among the Israelites was called the year of Jubilee, a time of rejoicing; the trumpet was blown loudly on the day of Atonement, that all the people might hear. If any man had lost or sold his possessions, he was

to have it again at the Jubilee; and if a poor Israelite had become a servant, his master was to let him go, and all that belonged to him. These laws were to teach the people kindness to their neighbors, and trust in God.

And God commands us now to trust to Him for all we want, and to be kind to the poor, and to give of what we have to those who have nothing. Those are happy families, where all is love: God's blessing is upon them. There is a family above, in which there is no sorrow nor unhappiness, because there is no anger, no unkindness. That family is the family of God in Heaven. God is love; the angels are full of love; and God's own people are full of love too; they love Him, and they love one another. We must pray God to put love into our hearts now, holy love to Him, and to all; that when we die, we may go to that world of love, to live there in peace and joy for ever: then we shall enjoy all that happiness which was typified by the year of Jubilee.

. L

NADAB AND ABIHU.



HERE were two of Aaron's sons who were priests, whose names were Nadab and Abihu. They were not humble and holy men like their father, but proud and disobedient. Without God's command, they ran into the tabernacle, with their censers in their hands, and offered strange fire, taken from the wrong place, and burnt incense before the Lord. God was angry with this rebellion, and he sent fire upon them, which struck them dead in a moment. Aaron saw his wicked sons die. But Moses told Aaron, that God had said He would be sanctified by His priests, and that when they came before Him, they must come with reverence: Nadab and Abihu had sinned, and God had punished them, and therefore Aaron and his sons were not to mourn, nor rend their clothes, but submit quietly to God. Then Aaron held his peace; he was full of sorrow; but he knew that God had done right, and humbly submitted to His will: he loved God's house, and law, and glory, more than he loved his wicked sons.

Parents cannot give their children new hearts; they can talk to them, and teach them, and tell them what is right, and pray for them; but they can do no more; they cannot save them; only God has power to do that; and therefore the children must themselves pray that their sins may be blotted out, and their hearts made new, and

their souls saved; that they may follow their parents to Heaven.

When Nadab and Abihu were killed, God gave Aaron some new commands, that he might not make God angry, as his sons had done. The High Priest was to go into the holy place, within the vail, only once a year, on the day of Atonement; and then he was to put on the holy garments. He was to offer a bullock for a sacrifice for his own sin, and a goat for the sins of the people, and to sprinkle the blood upon the mercy-seat in the most holy place; and he was to take fire from the altar, and bring it within the vail, and burn incense before the Lord. Afterwards, Aaron was to go out, and bring another goat alive: and to lay both his hands upon the goat's head, and confess his sins, and the sins of all the people, and put them upon the head of the goat. Then Aaron was to call a man, and tell him to lead the goat far away into the wilderness, that it might be seen no more. This goat was called the scape-goat.

Aaron, the Jewish High Priest, was a sinner like the people, and needed his own sins to be washed away. But our great High Priest, of whom Aaron was the type, needed no sacrifice, because he was all holy. He offered up the sacrifice of himself for our sins, not for His own; and then He went into the Holy Place, into Heaven, there to intercede for us before God. If

we humbly come to Jesus, and ask Him to take away our sins, He will forgive them all. God will never remember them again; they will be gone for ever. God says to those who come in faith to Jesus; "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." *Heb. viii. 12.*

 LI.

THE MOVING OF THE CAMP.

WHEN the Israelites rested in their camp, waiting for the cloud to move, every one had his own place; and each tribe was to keep by itself. The tribe were placed in the form of a square; in the middle was the tabernacle and the court; to the East, near the tabernacle, were the tents of Moses, Aaron, and the priests; and the other Levites, the Kohathites, the Gershonites, and the Merarites, pitched their tents on the South, West, and North. They were near the tabernacle, because it was their business to take care of it; to take it down when the camps moved, and to put it up again when they rested. The other tribes pitched their tents farther off. On the East, Issachar, Judah, and Zebulun; on the South, Simeon, Reuben, and Gad; on the West, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Benjamin; and on the North, Napthali, Dan, and Asher. When the cloud rested, the people rested too; but when the cloud moved, they were all to be ready for their journey. They had lived nearly a year at Mount Sinai; and now the cloud was taken up, and they all began to move. But there was no hurry nor confusion in the camps. All was orderly; every one knew what he had to do. First, the trumpets were sounded, and then the three tribes of the camp of Judah began to march. The tabernacle was taken down by the Levites; the Gershonites carried the curtains, and the Merarites carried the heavy boards and bars, and put them safely into wagons. Then the three tribes of Reuben's camp marched on; the Kohathites followed, carrying the holy vessels of the tabernacle. Next came Ephraim's camp; and, last of all, the camp of Dan, and all the sick and weak people who were unable to go fast. They journeyed wherever the cloud led them; and when they began to move, Moses prayed God to go with them; and when they rested, he prayed God to stay with them. They were always under His kind care and keeping, and therefore safe wherever they went.

When we journey, we should ask God to go with us too; and if we stay quietly at home, we should ask Him to be with us there. While we live in this world, we have to move often from place to place; it is not our rest; it is not our home; it is like the wilderness where the Israelites wandered so many years. But there is a home above; Heaven is like the pleasant land of Canaan which God promised to give His people. Wherever we are, we ought to seek to

have God with us; and always to live in His love, that He may smile upon us in everything we do. Then we shall be happy; He will keep us and comfort us, and bless us, while we live; and, when we die, take us to the happy home He has prepared for all who truly love and serve Him.

LII.

HOBAB.



We read before, that Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, came to visit him soon after the Israelites left

Egypt. Jethro had a son named Hobab, and he stayed with the Israelites all the time they were at Mount Sinai, for that was not far from his own country. But now God commanded the people to move, and go on into the wilderness; so Hobab prepared to leave them, and return home. But Moses did not wish to lose him, for he knew it would be for Hobab's good to go with the people of God; and he knew, too, that Hobab might be very useful in telling them many things which they did not know, about the places in which they would encamp in the wilderness. So Moses said to Hobab, "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it to you; come thou with us, and we will do thee good."

And was Hobab willing to go with them? No; at first he was very unwilling. He answered, "I will not go, but I will depart to my own land, and to my kindred." Then Moses tried again to persuade him. He said, "Leave us not, I pray thee; for thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and thou mayest be to us instead of

eyes. And it shall be, if thou go with us, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee." The Bible does not tell us that Hobab went with the Israelites as Moses wished, but we read of the children of Jethro living in Canaan many years after; perhaps they were the descendants of Hobab.

But we have something to learn from this story of Hobab. God's people now are, like the Israelites, traveling through a wilderness, and going to a place which God has promised to give them. The world is the wilderness, and Heaven is the pleasant land of Canaan beyond. The way which they go is a safe and a good way, and they are guided in it by God's work and God's Spirit, just as the Israelites were guided in their way by the pillar of the cloud and of fire. But the people of God do not like to travel by themselves to the promised land; they wish others to go with them. They say to their friends what Moses said to Hobab, "Come with us, and we will do you good." And those friends should be willing and thankful to go; they should say with all their hearts, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." *Zech. viii. 23.*

LIII.

THE QUAILS.



HE people now went away from Sinai, and came into the desert of Paran. They were led by the cloud and kept by God, and, with His love and blessing, they might have been very happy; but these Israelites were, like ourselves, weak, sinful people; and soon they began to be tired of serving God, and discontented with what He gave them. When they came to Taberah, they murmured, and God sent a fire which burnt many of them in their camps. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," for He is a "consuming fire."

Moses prayed to God to forgive the rest of the people, and He heard the prayer, and quenched the fire. But soon again the Israelites began to be discontented, and cried, and said, "Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish we ate in Egypt, and the cucumbers, and the onions, and the fruit: but now we have none; we have only this manna to eat, and we are tired of it; we do not like it." Then they all stood at their tent doors, and wept; and Moses heard them. How wicked they were! God gave them the manna; He rained it for them from Heaven; they had as much as they wished every day; but instead of being thankful, they were discontented.

Were they wicked? Yes; and let us take care not to be like them. How many people now are unthank-

ful, and discontented with the blessings God gives them, because it is not what they like; they wish for something better, like the fish, and onions, and fruits of Egypt. Let us learn to be thankful for what we have: whatever it is, God sends it, and we sin against Him if we are discontented with His blessings.

Moses was angry, and tired of hearing their murmurings. He told God how unhappy he was, and that he had no power to give the people what they wanted. But God kindly comforted Moses, and told him that He would give the people flesh. He had given them quails before, but only for one day; now He said they should eat flesh for a month, till they had had enough, and were sick and tired of it. Then God sent a strong wind which brought the quails, and they fell close by the camp. The Israelites stood all day and all night, greedily gathering the quails, as many as they could.

They had plenty of flesh now; but did it make them happy? No, because they had not God's blessing; for without His blessing there can be no true happiness. While they were eating the food, God's anger fell upon them, and He sent a plague which killed many of these rebellious people. The Israelites called the name of the place Kibroth-Hattavah, or the graves of those that sinned: and then they journeyed on sorrowfully to Hazeroth.

LIV.

THE SPIES.

THE Lord now spoke to Moses, and told him to send twelve men, one man from every tribe, to the land of Canaan, which God promised to give to His people Israel. The twelve men were to see if the land was good or bad; if the people there were strong or weak, few or many; and they were to come back again, with some of the fruits of Canaan, to show to the people. The men went away, and came to Hebron, and to a place called Eschol; and there they found some beautiful vines, covered with fine grapes. They cut down one branch, and put it upon a pole, and two men carried it; it was very heavy, the grapes were so many, and so large. They gathered some pomegranates and figs too; and after forty days, the spies came back again to the camp. All the people wished very much to know what the spies had seen, and to look at the beautiful fruit they had brought. The men said, "The land of Canaan is a very beautiful and fruitful country; full of corn, and vines and honey; but we fear to go there, because the people are many, and they are stronger than we." These men forgot that God was stronger than all, and that He had promised to fight for them, and to give them the land. They had no trust, no faith in their kind God; and they tried to frighten the people, that they might not go to the good land. But two of the spies were not like the others. Their names were Joshua and Caleb. They

trusted in God's promise, and did not fear. They said, "Let us go up, and possess the land; for we are able to overcome it." But the people were frightened, and began to weep; they believed the spies more than they believed God, and forgot to trust to His power. Then they murmured against Moses and Aaron, and said, "Why did you bring us away from Egypt? We were happier there than here: we wish we had died in the wilderness. Let us choose a captain and return to Egypt." Caleb and Joshua spoke gently, and tried to quiet them; but the people became more angry, and began to throw stones at Caleb and Joshua, to kill them. Then they looked up towards the tabernacle, and there they saw the glory of the Lord, and He spoke to Moses with a loud voice. He said He was now tired of His sinful people, and would not let them go to Canaan, but would destroy them in the wilderness. But Moses again prayed for them; he asked God not to forsake the people for whom He had done so many wonderful things; but to forgive them, and spare them still. God heard Moses' prayer, and He promised not to destroy the people directly; but He said He could not allow them to go to Canaan, that good land which He had promised to His obedient people. His faithful servants Joshua and Caleb, and those of the Israelites who were now children, should go: but all the others must wander forty years in the wilderness, until they died. Their

children would then be grown up, and Joshua and Caleb should go with them to Canaan, without the sinful disobedient parents. The people cried very much when they heard this. It was a great punishment to them. They could never again dwell in a settled home; never see a pleasant country any more; but they must pass all their lives in the desert wilderness.

The ten men who spoke evil of the land of Canaan, died of the plague before the Lord; but Caleb and Joshua were kept in safety. Then the perverse Israelites, instead of humbly submitting to their

punishment, said, "We will go to Canaan, the land God promised to us." Moses warned them; he told them not to go, because God was not with them, and their enemies would come, and fight against them, and kill them; but the people would not attend. They went to the top of the hill; but Moses, and the ark of God, and the blessing of God, did not go with them.

And had they power to take care of themselves? They thought proudly that they had; but soon their enemies, the Amalekites, came down, and smote them, and drove them away.

 LV.

THE SABBATH-BREAKER.



ABOUT this time, while the Israelites were still in the wilderness, another very sad thing happened among them. A man was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. The people who saw him, knew how wrong this was; so they took him directly, and brought him to Moses. Moses was very sorry to hear what the man had done; but he did not himself pass sentence upon him. God was the king and judge, and it was His law that had been disobeyed: and therefore Moses went to God, and told Him all, and asked what must be done, and how the man must be punished. And what did God say? Perhaps we might think that the man had committed only a little sin, and that God could not be very angry with him for gathering a few sticks on

the Sabbath day. But we must remember God does not look upon sin as we do. He cannot think disobedience to His laws a little sin. The man knew it was wrong to do any work on the Sabbath. He had stood by Mount Sinai on that dreadful day when the Lord came down upon it in fire, to give His commands to the people; and he had heard Him say, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." *Exodus* xx. 8-10. The man knew, too, that God had commanded the people to light no fire, and to dress no food, on the Sabbath; and that no manna was sent that day, but a double portion the day before, to teach them how very holy the Sab-

bath was. The man remembered all this, and yet he dared to disobey the command of God. This was not a little sin, but a dreadful act of rebellion against God; and the punishment of it was dreadful, too. "The Lord said unto Moses, the man shall be surely put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones. And all the congregation stoned him with stones, and he died."

This is a sad story. Learn from it how fearful it is to disobey the commands of God: and particularly the command which tells us to keep holy the Sabbath day. Many people break that command, even in this Christian country. Some buy, and sell, and do their daily work on Sunday, as on other days. And others spend the Sabbath in idle conversation and amusements. But God has told us not to find our own pleasure, nor to speak our own words, on His holy day; and He is as angry with those who break the Sabbath secretly, at home, and in their own families, as with those who break it openly. These wicked people, per-

haps, may escape unpunished for many weeks, and months, and years; but all their sins are known to God, and written down in the book of His remembrance. And if they do not repent, they will surely be punished in another world, for breaking God's holy day here.

Do you love Sunday? Do you love holy duties, and holy pleasures, better than any others? If not, you cannot be fit for Heaven. The happy people there will spend eternity in praising God. This is their greatest enjoyment: but it would be no enjoyment to you, if you do not like to praise and worship God now. If you do not serve Him here, you cannot live with Him, and sing His praises hereafter.

Pray to God to give you a new heart, and to make you love Him; and then you will love holy things, and holy duties, and holy pleasures, better than all the things of the world. You will be happy while you live; and, when you die, you will go to that "rest which remaineth for the people of God." *Heb. iv. 9.*

LVI.

THE REBELLION OF KORAH.



SOON after the spies returned, there was a new rebellion among the Israelites. Three men (Levites), named Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, spoke to Moses and Aaron, and asked why they took so much power and command among the people, and why Aaron was High Priest, and had so much

honor. Moses fell on his face when he heard this, and asked help from God to answer these wicked men; and then he said, "God will tell us who are His; He will show whom He chooses to be His High Priest. Come to-morrow, all of you; take censers, and put incense in them, and let God show us whom He will choose. You sin against the Lord

in being so proud, and rebellious. He has done much for you; and has honored you by letting you do His service in the tabernacle; why do you seek the priesthood, which He has not given you?" Then Moses was very much troubled, and he went and told his sorrows to God.

The next day, Korah and all his people took their censers and put fire in them, and incense, and stood at the door of the tabernacle. Then the glory of the Lord appeared, and He spoke with a loud voice, and told all the people to go away from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. All the people moved away, and the three wicked men came and stood at their tent doors, with their wives and children. Then Moses said, "God will now show whom He has chosen, and who are His people, and who have rebelled against Him. He will do a new thing; He will open the earth, and these wicked men shall go down alive into the pit, and perish." As Moses spoke, the ground shook, and the earth opened, and swallowed up Korah, and Dathan, and Abiram, and their wives, and children, and tents, and all they had. All went down alive into the great pit, and the ground closed again, and shut them in. Then God sent a dreadful fire, which burnt up the wicked men who were the friends of Korah. All the people feared very much, and fled when they heard the cry of those wicked men. But were the Israelites now humbled before God? No; the

next day they murmured again, and said to Moses and Aaron, "You have killed the people of God." Then the glory of the Lord appeared, and He spoke to Moses, and told him to go away quickly, that He might destroy the people in a moment. But Moses and Aaron fell down on their faces, and prayed to God. And then Moses told Aaron to go and make an atonement for the people, and to pray God to spare them. The plague now began among the Israelites; Aaron took a censer, and put incense in it, and fire from the altar, and ran boldly into the midst of the people. It was a sad sight! Many were dead already, and more were dying; but Aaron loved the people so much that he did not think about his own safety: he only wished to save them. He stood between the living and the dead, praying to God for His sinful people, and the plague ceased.

When we read this story we should remember what our great High Priest has done for us. We have all sinned against God, as the Israelites did, and deserve to die, to perish everlastingly. But Jesus has made an atonement for us, to turn away God's anger; and He intercedes for us with the Father. God heard Aaron's prayer, and the plague was stayed. Aaron saved many by his intercession; and Christ is able to save all those "who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." *Heb. vii. 25.*

LVII.

AARON'S ROD.



OD told the people, that He would now show them whom He had chosen to be His High Priest. He commanded Moses to take twelve rods, and to write upon each of them the name of one of the twelve tribes; and on the rod of the tribe of Levi he was to write Aaron's name, because Aaron was of the tribe of Levi. The rods were dry sticks; there was no life in them. God commanded them all to be put into the tabernacle, before the ark; they were to stay there one night, and God promised to make the rod of the man whom He chose, to bud and blossom, to bring forth flowers and fruit. This was a very wonderful thing to do; but Moses did not disbelieve God, for he knew He had power to do what He pleased; and, in faith and obedience, Moses laid up the twelve rods before the Lord. The next morning, Moses went into the tabernacle and looked at the rods; eleven of them were still dry and withered; but the rod of Levi, on which Aaron's name was written, was full of buds, and blossoms, and almonds. Moses brought them all out, and called the men to take their rods; and when they saw that Aaron's alone had budded, they knew that God had chosen him to be High Priest. The Lord told Moses to keep Aaron's rod safely; to put it into the ark, that it might be there

always to show the rebellious people that Aaron was God's chosen minister. The Israelites were obliged now to submit to the Lord. He had punished them for their rebellion; and He had shown them, by a miracle, whom He had chosen for His priest, that they might not again speak against Aaron. But still these people were not humbled; they cried, and said, "We shall die, we shall all perish!"

It is sad when punishment makes sinners angry and rebellious. God sends it to make them repent and turn to Him. He wishes all to be saved; He wants none to perish; and, when people forget Him, He sends sorrow to them, to make them remember Him; to see if they will confess their sin, and ask for forgiveness. He is ready and waiting to forgive all who come humbly to Him; Jesus is willing to save them, and to wash away their sins; the Holy Spirit is willing to come into their hearts, and to make them new and clean. But if sinners still resist and rebel, God will not wait for ever. He will at last cut them off, and send them away from Him to everlasting punishment. Then it will be too late to ask for pardon and salvation; for God will not hear their prayer. We must go to Jesus *now*, and all will be well; for He says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." *John vi. 37.*

LVIII

THE DEATH OF MIRIAM.



HE Israelites went on their journey again, and pitched their tents now in one place, and now in another.

Sometimes they came very near to Canaan; then God commanded them to turn round, and go back again. They wandered year after year in the wilderness, and were no nearer to the Promised Land than when they began. Why? Because they had sinned, and rebelled against God; they were to wander in the wilderness forty years, and never go to Canaan.

When they came to Kadesh-Barnea, Miriam, Moses' sister, became ill and died. We remember reading about her when, many years before, she sat watching her brother who lay in the river in his little ark. And afterwards, we read of her singing praises to God, when the Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea. Miriam was a prophetess; God gave her wisdom to know fu-

ture things; and she was a true servant of the Lord. But Miriam must not go to Canaan. Why not? Because she had rebelled against Moses, and made God angry.

Sin must be punished; God punishes his own people, as kind parents punish their dear children when they deserve it; not because they hate them, but because they love them so much, and wish them to be good and obedient. God punishes His people to make them sorry for sin, that they may ask from Him pardon for the past, and grace for the future. Miriam could not see Canaan, but her soul went to Heaven, the happy country of which Canaan was a type. Miriam's sins had been forgiven, and her heart made new, or she could not have gone there. She is happy now, and will never sin nor sorrow any more. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." *Rev. xiv. 13.*

LIX.

THE STRIKING OF THE ROCK.



WHEN the Israelites had buried Miriam in Kadesh-Barnea, they began to murmur again. There was no water to drink, and they forgot their kind God who so often fed them from Heaven, and would not trust Him. They said to Moses and Aaron, "Why did you bring us here to kill us with thirst?"

We wish we had died with our brethren before the Lord?" Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the door of the tabernacle, and the glory of God appeared to them. He heard their prayer, and He told them where to go for water, and what they must do. There was a great rock in the wilderness, and God commanded them to go

and speak to that rock, and He said He would bring water out of it. Then Moses took his rod, and he and Aaron called all the people to stand before the rock, to see the wonder that God was going to do. But Moses and Aaron were tired of the rebellion and disobedience of the people, and they became impatient and passionate. This was wrong; they should have asked God to give them meekness, and gentleness, and patience, and to help them to bear with the Israelites. But Moses and Aaron spoke very loudly, and cried to the people, "Hear, ye rebels, must we bring water for you out of the rock?" Then Moses smote the rock, and the water came out, and the people and their cattle drank. But God was angry with Moses and Aaron, because they had not obeyed Him, and when they came to Mount Hor, he spoke to them again, and told them that they must die, and not go to Canaan, because they had rebelled against him at the rock Meribah. Aaron must die first; his work was ended, but Moses had much to do still. All God's people have work to do; God gives them strength to do it; and when it is

finished, He takes them home to their rest.

God commanded Moses, and Aaron, and Eleazer, Aaron's son, to go up to the top of Mount Hor; and there Moses was to take off the holy garments from Aaron, and to put them upon Eleazer, and to make him High Priest instead of Aaron. All three went up; they knew why they went; Aaron knew that he was now going to die, that he should never offer sacrifices, and pray for his people again. Aaron knew, too, that he must have a sacrifice offered for him, and that he needed a High Priest to intercede for him; and he had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, who should come to offer up a sacrifice for all the world, the sacrifice of Himself. Aaron's sins had all been taken away, his heart had been made new by the Holy Spirit, and he was ready to die. Moses took off his brother's garments, and put them upon Eleazer; and then Aaron said farewell to Moses, and to his son, and lay down on the mountain, and died. Moses and Eleazer went back alone; and when the Israelites saw that Aaron was dead, they wept for him thirty days.

LX.

THE FIERY SERPENTS.



AFTER Aaron's death, the people went to Kibroth-Hataavah, and then to Zalmonah; and they murmured again, because they were tired of their long wanderings, and of the manna which God gave them. They forgot why it was that

they wandered so many years in the wilderness; it was for the punishment of their sin, and they ought humbly to have submitted to it; but their hearts were still proud, and rebellious, and unhumiliated before God.

God now punished his sinful peo-

ple again. He sent fiery serpents among them; and they bit the people, and many died. God has power over all creatures. He could bring quails to feed His people, and now He could bring serpents to kill them. The Israelites came to Moses, and confessed their sin, and asked him to pray for them to God. Moses was always ready to pray for them, and God was always ready to hear his prayers, and now He told Moses how the people must be cured of the serpents' bites. He commanded Moses to make a serpent of brass, and to put it upon a pole; and He said, that all who were bitten, if they looked upon the brazen serpent, should live. The bitten Israelites did as God said, and were cured, and went on their journey again.

We may learn a lesson from the story of the serpents. We are like

the bitten Israelites; we are all sick and perishing, not in our bodies, but in our souls. Satan, "the old serpent," destroys the soul, as the fiery serpents destroyed the body. We are all sinners; all in danger of perishing in sin; but there is a way to escape. What saved the bitten Israelites? They looked upon the serpent of brass and lived. And what can save us? Jesus says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved." *Isaiah* xlv. 22. He was lifted up upon the cross, to die on it for our sins: and if we look to Him in faith He has promised to save us, and to give us eternal life. He Himself, when He was upon earth, said to Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." *John* iii. 14, 15.

LXI.

B A L A A M .



WHEN the Israelites came to Heshbon, they fought with Sihon king of the Amorites. God had commanded all the Amorites to be slain, because they were wicked idolaters; and He promised to give their possessions to His people Israel. The people were now coming into Canaan, and they pitched near Jericho. Very soon God would give them the land; for the forty years were almost ended, and then they were to go and possess it:—not the rebellious and disobedient; they would all be dead; but their

children, who were now growing up, should go, and Caleb and Joshua with them.

There was a country, near the land of the Amorites, called Moab: the king's name was Balak. The Moabites heard what Israel had done to the Amorites, and other idolatrous people; and they began to be very much frightened, and thought that perhaps soon they should be destroyed too. These people did not go to God to help them; they did not ask the Israelites to teach them what was right, nor forsake their idols, and their

wickedness ; but they thought they would try to bring evil upon God's people ; for they hated them, and wished their destruction.

There was a prophet, but a wicked prophet, who lived a long way off from Moab, named Balaam. Balak king of Moab sent his servants to ask Balaam to come and curse the Israelites ; and the servants took money with them to tempt Balaam to go. The messengers went to the wicked prophet, and told him what their king said ; and when Balaam saw the money, he wished to go with them. He knew that it would be very wicked to curse God's people, and he ought to have sent the servants away directly ; but he said to them, "Stay one night, and I will tell you what God shall say to me." In the night, God came to Balaam, and asked "Who are these men ?" Then the prophet told Him who they were and why they came ; but God said, "Thou shalt not go ; thou shalt not curse my people ; for they are blessed." Balaam told the men, in the morning, what God said, and they went back to their master. But soon after, Balak sent more princes to Balaam, and promised to give him great riches and honors if he would come and curse Israel.

Balaam knew he could do nothing without God's leave, so he told the princes that he would ask God again. The Lord saw how rebellious and disobedient Balaam was, and He came to him and said, "If the man call thee, go ; but thou shalt speak only what I tell thee."

Then Balaam did not wait to be called, but rose early in the morning, and went with the princes. Balaam wished to go, and God let him have his wish ; but God's blessing was not with him. Balaam knew he was displeasing God ; he knew it was wrong to go to the enemies of the Lord, and curse His people ; he knew God had told him at first not to go, and that he was now disobeying Him. Was Balaam happy ? No—he could not be happy ; nothing can make us truly happy without God's blessing. When we wish for anything, or wish to go anywhere, we ought to ask ourselves, "Will God be pleased if I do this ? Is it His will that I should do so, or that I should go there ? because, if it is not, I cannot have His blessing, and then I cannot be happy." We should ask God to go with us, and to be with us wherever we are, and then all will be well.

LXII.

BALAAM'S ASS.

BALAAM rode upon his ass to go to Moab; he thought how he should do as he pleased, and have the money Balak promised him; but God would not give Balaam the power to curse His people; and without God Balaam could do nothing. The angel of the Lord came to stand in the way before the disobedient prophet; but Balaam was not thinking of God, and he did not see the angel. But the ass saw, and turned out of the road for fear, and Balaam beat the ass to turn it back again. Soon after, they came to a road through some vineyards, with a wall on both sides; and the ass saw the angel standing with a sword drawn in his hand, and pressed close to the wall, and hurt Balaam's foot, and he beat the ass again. Then the road became very narrow; the angel stood before, and there was no room to turn, and the ass fell down under Balaam. Then the prophet was very angry, and he beat the poor ass again with his stick; but it was not the ass that was rebellious and disobedient; no, it was the prophet who was so wicked, and so foolish, and the angel was sent to him. Balaam did not see the angel, and therefore he was cruel to the poor ass.

But God has power to do all things, and he did a very wonderful thing then; He opened the mouth of the ass, and enabled it to speak. Animals have not reason, nor the power of speaking, as most

of us have; God has not given them these things. He has given them instinct; He teaches them how to find their food, and how to take care of their young. He has made them very useful to man.

What did the ass say? It said, "Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden for many years past? What have I done? Why hast thou smitten me?" Balaam said, "Because thou hast not obeyed me; I wish I had a sword in my hand, for now I would kill thee." But the ass said again, "I have been thine ass a long time; did I ever do so before?" And Balaam answered, "No." Then God opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel standing before him, with a sword in his hand, and he was very much afraid, and fell down on his face. The angel asked, "Why hast thou smitten the ass these three times? I came out to meet thee, because thou wast rebellious and disobedient, and the ass saw me and turned away. If the ass had not turned away, I should have killed thee, and saved her alive." Then Balaam said, "I have sinned, I did not see thee standing in the way; now then, if thou art displeased, I will go back again." But the angel said, "No, go with the men to Moab, but speak only what I tell thee."

Then the angel went away, and Balaam went on to Moab. But was he sorry for his disobedience? No, he was frightened, but he was not humbled. He could not now curse

Israel with his mouth; for God, who enabled the ass to speak, took away from Balaam the power to say what he wished. But his heart was not changed; he was rebellious and disobedient, and covetous still.

LXIII.

BALAAM'S PROPHECY.

BALAAM came to Moab; and when King Balak heard he was there, he went to meet him directly. Balak was glad to see him, and said, "Why didst thou not come before? I am able to give thee money and honors, and many things, if thou wilt obey me." But Balaam answered, "Now that I am come, I have power to speak only what God commands me."

The next day, Balak brought Balaam to a high place, where they could see the camp of Israel: there the idol Baal was worshipped, and there they built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram upon every altar. When they had finished, Balaam told the king to stay by the altar, while he went to meet the Lord; for Balaam could not speak a word without God's command. God met Balaam, and told him what to say, and then the prophet went back to Balak. The king of Moab was waiting for him, and wishing to hear the curses against God's people. And did Balaam curse them? No; he could speak only God's words. He said, "Balak, king of Moab, sent for me to come and curse Israel; but how can I curse the people whom God has not cursed? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" *Numbers*, xxiii. 10. Then Balak said, "What hast thou done? I called thee to curse the people, not to bless them." But Balaam answered, "I told thee I must speak only what God commands." Again Balaam went to meet God, and again God put blessings into Balaam's mouth. He spoke of Israel's happiness, and of their future blessings. God gave him words, and made him speak blessings of His people Israel; for God had power over Balaam's mouth, as He had over the mouth of the ass. But it is sad to think of wicked Balaam: when he saw God's happy people, he wished to be safe and happy like them; but he did not pray to be made holy like God's people. They are people who have repented; whose sins have been washed away, and whose hearts have been made new and clean.

Balak was very angry with Balaam because he did not curse the Israelites; he gave him no money, and no honor, but sent him away. Balaam lost God's blessing, and worldly riches too; and, soon after, he was slain by the Israelites, when they fought against Midian. Learn from this sad story how fearful it is to forsake God, and how blessed those are who truly love and serve Him.

LXIV.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.



MOSES was now a very old man, 120 years old. The Israelites were close to Canaan, and soon they were to go there; but Moses must not go with them. He had sinned and disobeyed God at the rock, and his sin must be punished. But God was not angry with Moses now. No: Moses had repented, and he was forgiven, and his soul would go to Heaven. But God must punish His servant in this world; Moses could not go to the good land which God promised to His people. God said to him, "Go unto the mountain Pisgah, and there I will show thee all the land of Canaan; thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither." Then God told him to take Joshua, and make him the leader of the people, to guide them when Moses was dead. Moses did all God commanded. He took Joshua, and laid his hands upon him, and blessed him; and God gave him His Spirit, and made him wise and holy, that he might know how to command his people in the right way.

Then Moses called all the people together, that he might speak to them for the last time. They were the children who had grown up in the wilderness; the rebellious parents were dead. Moses spoke to them of all those wonders which God had done for them, and for their fathers, for forty years. This last speech of Moses is written in

the book of Deuteronomy. He told them all their past history, since they went from Egypt. He reminded them of God's kindness, and of their sins and rebellions, and of all the laws which God had given them; and then, when he had finished, he taught them a beautiful song of praise to God. The Israelites felt very sad when they heard their friend speak to them for the last time, and give them his dying blessing; and it was sad, too, to Moses to say farewell to those he loved. But he knew they had a friend in Heaven, who would never forsake them if they truly served Him; and he told them to love and obey their kind and holy God. Then he blessed Joshua again, and told him not to fear, because God was with him to strengthen and protect him; and then he and Joshua went together into the tabernacle.

And now God called Moses, and told him that the time was come for him to go up to the mountain, and die. God showed him from the mount, all the beautiful country of Canaan, with its hills, and fields, and water, and corn, and vineyards. Moses could not go there; but he was going to a better country, a heavenly one, where is no pain, nor sickness, nor sorrow, nor sin. Moses lay down on the mountain, and died, and the Lord buried him; no man knew where, nor how. Then all the people saw that Moses was dead, and they wept for him in the

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MOSES ON MOUNT PISGAH

plains of Moab thirty days. Joshua was now their commander; he was full of wisdom which God gave him, and the people obeyed him, as they had before obeyed Moses.

LXV.

R A H A B .



AFTER Moses was dead, God spoke to Joshua, and told him not to fear, for He was with him, to strengthen him to conquer his enemies; and that, in three days, he and the Israelites should go over Jordan into Canaan. Then Joshua called two men, and sent them secretly to Jericho, to spy out the land. The men obeyed, and went to the house of a woman named Rahab, and stayed there. Very soon after, the king of Jericho heard that two Israelites were come as spies, and he sent to Rahab, and told her to bring out the men. But Rahab took them, and hid them in the house, and told the messengers that the men were gone, she knew not where; so the messengers went away to seek them.

When they were gone, Rahab went up to the two Israelites, to the flat top of the house, where she had hid them under some stalks of flax, and she said to them, "I know God has given you this land; I have heard all the wonderful things He has done for you, and I believe that He is the true God of Heaven and earth. I have been kind to you, and hid you from your enemies here; when you come and take

Jericho, be kind to me, and save me and my family from the sword." The spies said, "Yes, when God gives us the land, we will be kind to thee, and spare thee." The woman let them down from the window by a rope, and told them to go quickly to the mountain, and hide there three days, till the enemies were returned. Then the men said, "As soon as we are gone, bind a scarlet thread in the window, that we may remember the house when we see it; and then we will save thee and all thy family; but tell no one that we have been here." Rahab promised not to tell, and the men went away, and she bound the scarlet thread in the window.

Rahab was a heathen, and did not know much of the true God; but when she was told of the wonderful things He did for His people, she believed. She believed He would do what He said, and give the land to the Israelites; and it was in faith that she hid the spies, and sent them away safely. It was not right of Rahab to say that the men were gone, when she had hid them in her house; but Rahab did not know that lying is so great a sin as God says it is.

LXVI.

JORDAN.



THE Israelites were now to pass over the river Jordan, and Joshua told them all to be ready the next day. How could they go through? The river was wide, and there was no bridge, nor any ships to carry them over. God knew how. He had brought them through the Red Sea, and He could bring them over the river Jordan too. God told Joshua to command the priests to take up the ark, and to go before the people. When the priests came to the river, and their feet were dipped into the water, then the waters divided, and stood up like a wall; and the priests, with the ark, went through first, and the people followed on dry ground. When they had all passed over, Joshua called twelve men, one of every tribe, and told them each to take a stone from Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood upon dry ground, when the waters divided. These twelve stones Joshua set up in Gilgal, that when, in future times, the Israelites' children should ask, "What are these stones?" their parents might tell them the

wonderful story of God's bringing His people through the river on dry ground.

How powerful God is, and how kind to His own people! He took care of Israel for many long years; when they were in Egypt, and when they were in the wilderness; and, at last, we read that He brought them safely to Canaan.

And God promises to take care of His people now. He gives them all that He thinks right; He helps them to fight against their sinful hearts, and Satan, who tempts them so often; and, at last, He brings them to the heavenly Canaan above.

This world is like the wilderness; it is full of sorrow and pain, and between it and Heaven there is a river which God's people must pass, that is *death*. But they need not fear; for God promises to be with them there. The ark, which the priests carried, was the type of Christ, and it went over Jordan with the Israelites. And when we come to die, if we are the servants of Christ, He will be with us; He will bring us safely through, and land us in the happy Canaan above.

LXVII.

JERICH O T A K E N .



THE Lord told Joshua, that He had given Jericho to him, and that he should conquer and possess it.

But how were the Israelites to conquer it? Were they to go and fight against it with swords, and spears, and battering rams? No; God told all the soldiers, and the priests, carrying the ark, to walk round the city once every day, for seven days. Seven of the priests were to carry trumpets; and to blow with them as they passed on before the ark. The last day, they were to go round the city seven times; and the priests were to blow the trumpets, and the people to shout; and then God said the walls should fall down, and they should go in, and possess it.

The people believed God, and did all He commanded. They walked

round the walls once each of the six days, carrying the ark, and blowing with the trumpets; and on the seventh day, they walked round seven times, and the priests blew the trumpets, and the people shouted; and then the walls fell down, and they went up and took the city. But the spies did not forget their promise to Rahab; they went to her house, and brought her out, and all her family, and put them in safety; and then they burnt the city with fire. All the silver, and gold, and brass, and iron, they saved for the Lord's house; but the Israelites were commanded not to take any thing for themselves. Jericho was an accursed place, because the people who lived there were so wicked; and therefore, all were to be destroyed.

LXVIII.

A C H A N .



BUT one wicked man named Achan, thinking no eye saw him, disobeyed the command, and took some of the riches which he found, and went and hid them. Joshua did not know what was done, and the people did not know; God alone saw Achan's wickedness; but He did not tell Joshua of it directly.

There was a city near Jericho

called Ai, and the Israelites asked Joshua to let them go there, and take the city. They said, "It is a small place, and we shall soon take it; we need not all go; a few soldiers will be enough to conquer Ai." But the Israelites forgot that they had no power of themselves. It was God who helped them to conquer, and if He hid His face from them, their power was nothing.

A few of the people went up to

fight against Ai. Did they conquer? No; their enemies smote and killed many of them, and drove the rest away.

Why was this? Because God was angry, and He was not now fighting for Israel. And why was God angry? Why did He turn away from His people, and refuse to help them? Joshua did not know; but he saw that God was displeased, and this made him very unhappy. He rent his clothes and put dust upon his head, and fell down on the ground. Was this all he did? No; he did what all God's people ought to do when they are unhappy,—he went and prayed to the Lord. All day he lay before ark; and he asked God to return to His people again, and to help them as He had done before. The Lord heard Joshua's prayer; for He is always ready to attend to us when we pray, and to comfort us when we are in sorrow. He commanded Joshua to arise, and then He told him why He did not fight for Israel now. He told him that one man had sinned, and had stolen, and hid his stolen things in the tent; and He commanded Joshua to seek that man, and to put him to death: because God could not fight for His people when sin was among them.

Joshua obeyed directly. He called all the tribes, and all the families, and God helped him to find the right man. Achan was taken. God's eye saw him among all the thousands of Israel, and pointed him out to Joshua. Then Joshua called Achan, and spoke very solemnly to him. Joshua was not angry, but sorry to think how wicked Achan had been; and now

he told Achan to confess his sin, and pray for pardon, and warned him of the wickedness of denying what he had done. Achan confessed all; he said, "I saw among the riches of Jericho, some silver, and gold, and a beautiful garment; and I coveted them, and stole them, and hid them in my tent." So Joshua sent men to the tent; and there they found the silver, and gold, and the garment, and they brought them to Joshua; and every thing that belonged to Achan they brought too; his wife, and children, and possessions. Then Joshua commanded that Achan and his family should be stoned, and afterwards burnt with fire. When they were dead, the people went again to Ai; and God was with them then, and helped them to fight; and Ai was soon taken and destroyed.

Joshua built an altar to the Lord; and upon the stones of the altar he wrote the law of Moses. Then the Israelites stood round the altar, half of the tribes over against Mount Ebal, and half of them over against Mount Gerizim, as God had before commanded, and then Joshua read to them the words of the law; all God's curses against those who would not obey Him; and all His blessings to His own people and servants. The Israelites had much to do at this time; they were busied with their wars and conquests; but they did not refuse to attend.

Whatever we have to do, we ought always to find time for reading God's word, and serving Him, and never say we are too busy to attend to holy things. Nothing will go on well without God's blessing. We must seek it every day we

live, and in every thing we do. | a kind God waiting to hear our
And how thankful we ought to be, | prayers, and to love and bless us!
that we have the Bible to read, and |

LXIX.

THE GIBEONITES.



WHEN the wicked nations of Canaan heard of what the Israelites were doing, of all their conquests, and their great power, they came together to fight against Joshua and his men. It was wicked, and foolish too, to try to fight with God's people. God had promised to give Canaan to the Israelites, and to help them to conquer their enemies; and those wicked Canaanites had no power to resist His will. But there were some of these people who did not wish to fight with Israel, because they felt it would do no good, and they were in great fear that Joshua would kill them. These people were the Gibeonites. It was right of them to feel their own weakness, and God's strength, and to wish to be at peace with His people; but they did not seek for peace in the right way. They knew that Joshua was not commanded to fight with the people who lived far off, but only with those who lived in Canaan; so they determined to deceive him; and to pretend to have come from a country very far off, and to ask him to make peace with them.

So the Gibeonites took their asses, and put sacks upon them, and in the sacks they put dry mouldy bread; the skin wine-bottles which they carried were broken, and their

shoes and clothes old and torn. The Gibeonites soon came to the camp of the Israelites at Gilgal, for it was not far from them, and asked to speak to Joshua. They said, "We wish to make peace with you; we are come a long way to see you." The Israelites answered, "Perhaps you are Canaanites, and we must not make peace with them." The Gibeonites said, "No, we are not Canaanites; we come from a country very far off; we have been traveling many days, and are tired with our long journey; you see our dry bread, and our broken bottles, and our old shoes and garments; all were new when we began our journey; but now they are worn out, because we have been so long a time on the road. When we were in our own country, we heard about you, and about all that you did to the kings of Heshbon and Bashan, and we were afraid you would destroy us also; so we are come now to ask you to be at peace with us, and we will serve and obey you."

This story was not true; but Joshua believed it; so he did not ask God to tell him what he ought to do, but he made peace with the Gibeonites, and promised not to destroy them. Then the Gibeonites were much pleased, and went home again. But two or three days after, the Israelites heard that these

people, with whom they had made peace, were Canaanites, and lived very near to them. Then the Israelites were vexed, and angry too, and they said, "What shall we do? These Gibeonites are Canaanites, and we ought to kill them; but we cannot because we have promised not to hurt them, and we must keep our promise."

So Joshua called for the Gibeonites, and said to them, "Why have you deceived us? Why did you say you came from a very distant country, when you knew you lived close by us? You have done very wrong to deceive us so wickedly. We promised not to kill you, and

we will keep our promise; but we will punish you for your deceit; you shall be our servants, and do all our hard work for us: you shall cut our wood, and draw our water, and help us in the work we have to do for the house and altar of God." The Gibeonites said, "We were so very much afraid that you would kill us; fear made us deceive you; we are willing to be your servants; do not kill us, and we will do all you say." Then Joshua promised again not to hurt them; but he made them servants to the Israelites, hewers of wood, and drawers of water, for all the people, and for the altar of God.

LXX.

THE KINGS CONQUERED.



SOON after Joshua had made peace with the Gibeonites, the wicked kings of the Amorites heard of it, and went to Gibeon to fight against it, because it had made peace with the Israelites. The Gibeonites were very much frightened when they saw these kings, and their armies, coming to fight them; but they knew where to go for help; they sent to Joshua, and asked him to come and save them from their enemies.

When we are in sorrow and danger, it is very pleasant to have kind friends to comfort and help us; but there is only one Friend who has power always to save us from all evil, and to fight for us against our worst enemies, the enemies of our souls. Who is that Friend?

It is the Lord Jesus Christ; He is "a Friend at all times," and He tells us to call upon Him in the time of trouble.

Did Joshua go to help the Gibeonites, or did he say he would do nothing for people who had been so deceitful? No, Joshua had promised to be kind to them, and he did not forget his promise now they were in trouble: he went directly, and all his soldiers with him. He was right to go; we ought always to be willing to help those who ask our help; and if people have done wrong to us in time past, we should be ready to forgive and forget all, and be kind to them when they are in sorrow. But Joshua and his men of themselves could not do much; God alone could conquer the enemy, and He promised He would.

He said to Joshua, "Fear not; for I am with thee."

The kings were soon conquered, and fled from the Israelites; and many of their soldiers were killed with hail-stones, which God sent from heaven to destroy the enemies of His people. God did a wonderful thing that day: Joshua and the Israelites were many hours fighting, and they feared darkness would come on, and then they would not know where to find their enemies. But Joshua had great faith in God; he knew He could do everything, and that He had promised to do great things for His people; so Joshua asked God to do a very wonderful miracle then, a new miracle, never seen before. What was it? Joshua spoke to the Lord, and said, "Sun, stand thou still in Gibeon; and thou moon, in the valley of Ajalon." And did the sun and moon obey? Yes, because it was the will of God that they should; it was His power, not Joshua's, that made them stand still, and He gave the command in answer to Joshua's prayer. The sun and the moon stayed as they were all that day; hour after hour passed, and the sun and the moon were in the same place still, until all the enemies of Israel were conquered.

How wonderful God is! How great His power is, and His kindness too, to His own people! We may safely trust Him in all dangers, if we love and serve Him; but we must remember that He has power to destroy His enemies, as well as to save His friends.

The wicked kings fled and hid in a cave; they thought Joshua could not find them there; but they could not save themselves. Joshua soon heard where they were, and he commanded his people to roll great stones to the mouth of the cave to keep the kings in, till all his enemies were conquered. And when the Israelites had finished fighting, Joshua brought out the kings and slew them. The Amorites had long sinned against God, and now they must be destroyed. God's enemies will all perish at last. He waits a long time for them to repent and turn to Him; but if they will not, He will cast them away for ever. Then let us pray God to make us His people; to give us new hearts, and to help us, by His Holy Spirit, to love and serve Him. And then we shall be safe and happy, and have God for our friend for ever.

LXXI.

THE DIVISION OF CANAAN.



ANY years passed away. Joshua and the Israelites spent those years in fighting with their enemies; and God helped them, until almost all the land was conquered. Joshua was now an old man, and God called to him and said, "Thou art old, but all the land is not yet possessed: soon I will give the whole country to my people Israel, as I promised; and now divide the land, and give possessions to all the tribes." Joshua obeyed, and gave to each tribe a part of the land; but he gave none to the tribe of Levi. Why? Because that was the tribe of priests; their possession was the sacrifices offered to the Lord, and they wanted no more. But forty-eight cities, in different parts of the country, were given to them; there they lived, and had schools where the young Israelites were taught to worship and praise the Lord. The tribe of Reuben, and the tribe of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, had their possessions on the other side of the river Jordan. They had asked Moses for that part, because they liked it best; and Moses had said, "If you will come over Jordan with us, and help your brethren to fight against their enemies, you may have possessions where you wish; but you

must not live idly here, while the others are busy fighting; when the land is all possessed, you may return, and you may leave your wives and children here now, but you must go over Jordan and help your brethren." Then the three tribes promised to obey, and they did as Moses said; and now, when their enemies were conquered, they went home to live in peace. The Israelites were very glad to have those quiet possessions in their beautiful land.

And does God give no possession, no home, to His people now? Yes, and a better home, a better possession than Canaan: but it is not in this world. The home of God's people is in heaven; their possession is there. Canaan was a type of heaven; and beautiful as Canaan was, heaven is much better. Do we wish to go there? We have enemies as the Israelites had, and we must conquer them before we can have our heavenly possessions. How can we conquer them? We must do as the Israelites did; we must ask God to fight for us, and to make us conquerors by his power, not our own. Jesus Christ is better and stronger than Joshua; and if we ask Him, He will save and deliver us from all our enemies, and bring us in safety to our happy home in heaven.

LXXII.

THE CITIES OF REFUGE.



THE Israelites now all assembled at Shiloh, and there they set up the tabernacle; for this was the place God had appointed; and here the sacrifices were to be offered.

There were six cities, among the forty-eight belonging to the Levites, called cities of refuge. They were in different parts of Canaan, and their names were Kedesh, Shechem, Bezer, Hebron, Ramoth, and Golan. These cities were appointed by command of God. Why? We read in the Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt do no murder;" and God told Moses that murderers must be punished with death. But sometimes a man might kill another without wishing to do it; without being angry, or hating the person he killed; he might kill him by accident; he might throw a stone when he did not see any one, and the stone might fall on the head of a man, and kill him. Was the man who threw the stone a murderer? Must he be put to death? No, God did not wish this; that man was not like a cruel murderer who hates his neighbors, and waits slyly for him, and at last kills him. God made a way of escape for the manslayer. The manslayer was to run directly to one of the cities of refuge; he was not to wait; if he were found on the road he might be

killed; he was to run to the city, and the Levites there would take care of him; but he was not to go out of the city till the High Priest died, and then he might return home. The roads to the cities of refuge were broad and smooth: the manslayer could run very quickly along them; there were bridges over the rivers and streams; and at the cross roads, large stones, and the words, "Refuge, Refuge," written upon them. So the manslayer had no need to stay to ask his way, and he could always escape to a city of refuge, and be there safely before night. But if he lingered on the road, or stayed to rest, the friends of the dead man might overtake him and kill him; and nothing could save the manslayer then. He was safe in the city of refuge, and there alone.

Jesus Christ is our refuge. If we run to Him, believe in Him, pray to Him, ask Him to save us, we are safe, as safe as the manslayer was in the refuge city. But if we do not fly to Christ, we can have none to save us; and then we must perish. Let us go to Him directly, without waiting or lingering. He is always ready to receive us: He says, He will not cast out those who come to Him. But if we linger, we may perish before we reach the place of safety, and where shall we be then?

LXXIII.

THE DEATH OF JOSHUA.



OD had now given rest to the Israelites a long time, and Joshua was very old, and felt that he must soon die. He loved his people very much; and he wished to talk to them, and bid them farewell. He called them all to Shechem, and spoke to them there for the last time. The Israelites felt very sad when they looked upon their dear old friend whom they had known so long, and they stood very attentively to hear all he said. Joshua told them of all God's kindness to them in past years, His love to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and His mercy to the Israelites in Egypt. Then Joshua told them to remember all the wonders God had done to their enemies, the Egyptians, and the Amorites, and many more people whom God had given them power to conquer.

When Joshua had finished, he asked, "Now, tell me, whom do you wish to serve, and worship, and obey? Will you serve the idols of the Amorites, and the Egyptians, or God, the true God, who has done all these things for you?" Then all the people answered, "We will serve the Lord." But Joshua said, "You are not able of yourselves to serve Him rightly, for He is a very holy God: He hates sin, and He

punishes all those who rebel against Him." But the people cried again, "We do wish to love and serve the Lord." Then Joshua told them to throw away all their idols, and to pray to God to help them to serve Him aright. Joshua wrote their promise in the book of the law; and then he took a large stone, and put it up under an oak tree, and called the people and said, "Look at that stone; it has heard your promise that you will serve the Lord. Here it is, a remembrance of what you have done."

Then Joshua sent the people to their homes, and, very soon after, he went to his home in Heaven. He had lived many years, 110; he had fought many battles, and done many wonderful things by God's power; but now all was finished, and he laid down to rest in the quiet grave. Joshua was glad to go to a better country than Canaan; he did not fear death, because his sins were forgiven, and his soul saved. He had lived in the love of God, and now he was going to be with God for ever. The Israelites were sorry to lose their kind teacher: and they tried to remember all he had said to them, and did not forget their holy promise to serve the Lord. It is a happy thing when people choose God for their friend, and not the world.

LXXIV.

KING EGLON.



THE Israelites remembered their promise for a few years, and served God, and would not worship the idols around them.

But after a time they forgot God, and Joshua, and all he had said to them, and their own promise, and began to rebel against God again.

The Israelites forgot God, but He remembered them still. One day, when they were worshipping their idols, they saw an angel coming to them from God. He came to tell them of their sin, and of God's anger. He told them of their disobedience and rebellion; and said, that now God would not be with them, to help them to conquer their enemies, but would leave them to themselves. This was very sad, and all the Israelites wept for sorrow. They had no friend, no father, no kind God now, because they had forsaken Him, and He had turned away from them. But the Israelites knew that God would hear prayer, and they went and prayed to Him. They confessed their sins, and asked for forgiveness, and offered a sacrifice. Were they right to do this? Yes; when we sin, we can have pardon in Jesus, and by Him alone: and if we pray to Him in faith, He promises to take away our sins, and to renew our hearts by His Holy Spirit. God heard the Israelites' prayer. He gave them judges; wise men who helped them to conquer their enemies, and taught the people to love and serve the Lord.

But again the Israelites did

wickedly, and then God sent cruel enemies to fight against them; and they cried to Him, and He heard them.. Eighteen years they served Eglon, the cruel and wicked king of Moab. At last, God sent the Israelites a man to help them, whose name was Ehud. The Israelites had a present to send to Eglon, and they asked Ehud to take it to him. Ehud made a dagger, and hid it under his clothes, and went to Moab. When he came to the king, he said he had a secret thing to tell him alone; so Eglon sent away his servants. Eglon was sitting in his own room, a summer parlor which was very cool and pleasant; and he thought himself safe there, for he did not know why Ehud had come. When they were alone, Ehud took out his dagger, and thrust it into the king's body, and killed him; and then Ehud ran out of the room, and locked the doors and escaped. None saw Ehud go; and when the servants found the doors locked, they thought their master was asleep; so they did not go in. Many hours passed, and then the servants began to wonder why the king did not send for them, and, at last, they took a key and opened the door. What did they see? The king lying upon the ground, dead!

Ehud soon came back again, bringing many soldiers with him; and the Israelites fought against the Moabites, and conquered them. It was God who delivered the people of Israel from their cruel enemy, and He was pleased to do so by the

hand of Ehud. We must not think, from this story, that it can ever be right to deceive and murder even our enemies; but we may learn from it, that when the people of God are in danger, and pray to Him for help, He can find a way to deliver them from their trouble, and to give them peace and safety.

LXXV.

DEATH OF SISERA.



WHEN Ehud was dead, the Israelites again rebelled against God; so soon they forgot all His mercies, and their own promises to love and obey Him. God, therefore, punished them again. He cannot let His people sin, and take no notice: He is like a kind parent who punishes his disobedient children in love; to make them better, not because he hates them.

God sent Jabin king of Canaan to fight against Israel, and conquer them. He was very cruel, and they suffered much under his power for twenty years. God did not fight for them then, because they had rebelled, and made Him turn away from them. The Israelites felt this; and they remembered their sins, and repented and cried to the Lord to forgive and help them. And did God attend to these rebellious people? Yes, for he is so merciful that He never sends away any who humbly pray to Him.

There was a very good woman living at that time, named Deborah. She dwelt under the palm tree between Ramah and Bethel; and there she prayed, and sang praises to God, and talked to and taught all the people who came to see her. She was a very wise woman; God

had given her the best wisdom, the knowledge of Himself; and He taught her to prophesy; and to know the future, that she might tell the Israelites what they must do, and how they could be delivered from their cruel enemy, Jabin. When the Israelites began to cry to God, Deborah, at His command, sent for a brave man, named Barak, and said to him, "Go now, and call men out of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali, and take them to fight against Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army; for God promises to give us the victory." Then Barak said, "If thou wilt go with me, I will go;" so Deborah went with him, and 10,000 men, to fight against Sisera. But Deborah told Barak, that he should not kill Sisera, but that God would give the wicked captain into the hands of a woman.

So Barak and his army went and fought against Sisera; and soon the Israelites had the victory, because God was with them. Then Sisera came down from his chariot, and ran away on his feet to escape from Barak. There was a man named Heber who was at peace with Jabin; and Sisera ran to Heber's tent for safety. The name of the man's wife was Jael. When Jael saw Sisera

coming, she went out to meet him, and said, "Come in, come in, fear not." So Sisera came in, and lay down; and she covered him with a mantle. Then he asked for water to drink; and she gave him milk, and he drank, and lay down again. Then he said, "Stand by the door, and if any one ask if I am here, say, No." Sisera was soon asleep, for he was weary with fighting and running so far; and then Jael went very softly, and took a large nail, and a hammer, and hammered the nail into Sisera's head and down into the ground, while he slept,

and killed him. Soon after, Barak came to the door of the tent, and Jael called him in, and showed him his enemy lying dead upon the ground.

Barak and Deborah felt that it was the Lord, not themselves, nor their soldiers, who had gained the victory, and they sang a beautiful song of praise to Him. How glad the Israelites were to be in peace again! War is a sad thing. If we live in a peaceful country, let us thank God for it; because it is He who gives us peace, as well as all our other mercies.

LXXVI.

THE MIDIANITES.



FORTY years passed happily and safely; the Israelites lived in the fear of God, and He kept them in peace, and gave them rest from their enemies. When nations serve God, then they have His blessing; He does them good, and gives them all they need; and they become happy and strong, and none can make them afraid. Solomon says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation." It is God's blessing that makes people truly happy: not riches, nor power, nor possessions.

When the forty years were passed, the Israelites began again to do evil; and then new sorrows and punishments came upon them. God sent the Midianites to be their enemies. These people came in great numbers; they brought their camels and their cattle with them, and pitched their tents in the pos-

sessions of the Israelites; and the Israelites left their pleasant houses and fields, and ran to hide in dens and caves, for fear of the cruel Midianites. When the grass, and corn, and fruit grew up in the fields, these enemies took all away for themselves, and for their cattle; and the pleasant land began to look barren and desolate, because the Midianites tried to destroy it. Then the Israelites cried again to the Lord, for they knew that He could deliver them, and He alone. God sent an answer to them by a prophet. He had not forgotten his people, but He was very much displeased with them: and the prophet came to tell them this. He said, "Thus saith the Lord, I brought you safely out of Egypt, and delivered you from the cruel Egyptians, and drove away your enemies, and gave you the land of Canaan

for a possession ; and I commanded you to obey and serve me, and not to worship the idols of the people who live near you ; but you have not obeyed my command." Then the prophet went away ; God sent no kind promise of forgiveness to His ungrateful people, for He wished them to feel sorry, and to know how sad it is to be without His love and blessing. And did God give up the Israelites to their enemies ? Would He hear their prayers no more ? No, God was very merciful ; He was angry with His people, but He did not forsake them. He had heard their prayers, and now he was going to save them.

There was a man who lived in Ophrah named Joash, and he had a son named Gideon. Gideon was a true servant of the Lord ; but his father was an idolater, and worshipped Baal. One day, Gideon was threshing wheat in a very secret place, for he was afraid that the Midianites would see him, and come and take his corn from him ; and then he and all his family might die of hunger. Gideon had many sorrowful thoughts as he threshed

the wheat ; but his sorrow did not make him idle. He trusted in God for deliverance ; but he knew that it was his duty to be industrious, and to try to do all he could to help himself. Gideon had no friend to comfort him ; his family worshipped Baal ; he alone loved and served the true God. And did God forsake His faithful servant in the time of sorrow ? No ; Gideon looked up, and saw an angel near him, sitting under an oak : the angel was come to comfort him, and to deliver his country. Gideon did not at first know who the angel was ; but he heard Him say, "The Lord is with thee." How glad he was to know this ! He had no need to fear nor be unhappy, if the Lord was his friend.

If we are God's people, then the Lord is with us too. When we are alone, in sorrow or in danger, though we may have no friends on earth, yet we still have God to comfort us. He is always near. He says to us in His holy word, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." *Hebrews* xiii. 5.

LXXVII.

G I D E O N .



WHEN Gideon heard the angel say, "The Lord is with thee," he looked up with wonder, and said, "Is the Lord with us ? Then why does He let the Midianites come and destroy us ? Why does he not work miracles for us, as He did for our fathers, and de-

liver us from our enemies ?" The Lord said, "Go now, I send thee to save Israel from the Midianites." Gideon was fearful : he had faith in God, but his faith was weak and small ; and he could not believe that he should save Israel. "How can I save my brethren ?" he said ; "I am poor ; all my family are poor,

and I am the least in my father's house." But the Lord answered, "I will be with thee; I will give thee power to smite the Midianites."

Gideon now began to think that it was not a man, nor an angel, who was talking to him; for neither a man nor an angel could give him power to conquer his enemies: and he said, "Wilt thou give me a sign, that I may know who thou art? Stay till I come again, and bring my offering with me." Then Gideon went into the house, and made ready a kid, and cakes of flour; he put the flesh into a basket, and the broth into a pot, and brought all out to the oak tree where the angel was waiting. The holy angel did not want food to strengthen him, as weak, sinful men do: but he accepted Gideon's offering, and told him to lay the flesh and the cakes upon the rock, and to pour out the broth. Gideon knew not why, but he obeyed; and then the angel of the Lord touched, with his staff, the flesh and the cakes, and fire

came out of the rock, and consumed them. The angel departed; Gideon knew not how, nor where; but now he knew who that angel was. Then Gideon cried with holy fear, "Alas, O Lord God, for I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." But God comforted him, and said, "Peace be unto thee; fear not, thou shalt not die:" and Gideon named the place "Jehovah-shalom," or "The Lord send peace," and built an altar there to the Lord.

Gideon was young and poor, but God did not forget nor despise him. Gideon wished to serve the Lord, and prayed for health and strength, and God heard his prayer. God does the same now. He says, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." *Proverbs* xiii. 17. He wishes the young to come to Him; to believe in Jesus, to pray to Him, to love Him, to give Him all their hearts, all their affections. Then every thing will be well with them, and God will give them peace in all their fears and sorrows.

LXXVIII

BAAL'S ALTAR.



THE night after Gideon had seen the angel of the Lord, God spoke to him again. There was much for Gideon to do, and he must not be idle; he must show all the idolatrous people around him, that he loved and served the true God. God said to him, "Take thy

father's bullock, and throw down the altar of Baal which thy father has, and build an altar unto the Lord, and offer the bullock in sacrifice upon it." Gideon's family all worshipped Baal; they might be very angry if the idol altar was thrown down; perhaps they might kill Gideon. Was he not afraid to

obey God? No; Gideon knew that he ought to fear God more than men. He knew that God had promised to be with him, and that He had power to keep him safely from all his enemies. So Gideon rose directly; he thought it best to destroy Baal's altar in the night, because he feared the men of the city might try to prevent him, if he waited till morning. He was right; when we have work to do, we should always do it directly: the sooner the better.

When the people rose next day, they wondered to see Baal's altar thrown down, and a new altar to God ready built, and a bullock offered upon it. Then they asked, "Who did all this?" and soon they heard that Gideon had done it. He was not afraid to confess the truth; he was bold, because he knew God was with him. But the people were all very angry with Gideon, and they said to Joash, "Bring out thy son, that he may die."

Satan's people have often tried to destroy God's people in all ages of

the world: many holy martyrs have suffered, because they would not worship idols, nor obey the wicked commands of men. These faithful servants of God, like Gideon, were not afraid to confess their belief in the true God. They thought it better to obey God and die, than to disobey Him and live. They trusted boldly in Him alone, and then they went to cruel, painful deaths, peacefully and happily.

But was Gideon killed? No; God had given him work to do, and He helped him to do it, and did not let his enemies hurt him. Joash was not angry, but kind and gentle to his son; and he said that all who tried to build again the altar of Baal should be put to death, because Baal was a vain idol, and could not save himself. All the Midianites and Amalekites were now gathered together at Jezreel; but Gideon did not fear them, because God's Spirit came upon him; and he blew a trumpet, and called together a great many soldiers, and made them ready to fight.

LXXIX.

THE LITTLE ARMY.



BEFORE Gideon began to fight, he asked God to promise to save Israel from the Midianites. He said, "Give me now a sign, that I may know that thou wilt be merciful to the Israelites. I will put a fleece of wool upon the ground to-night; in the morning I will look at it; and if I see the fleece wet with dew, and all the ground

dry, then I shall know that thou dost promise to save us from our enemies." Gideon put the fleece of wool upon the ground, and God heard his prayer. In the morning, when Gideon looked at it, it was very wet, and he wrung from the fleece a bowl full of water; but there was no dew upon the ground.

We know that the moisture in the air, which we cannot see by day,

becomes cool at night, and turns to dew. But why was the fleece alone wet, and everything else dry? Because God had heard the prayer of Gideon, and He wished to show him that He can do all things, and to teach him to trust in Him. The next night, Gideon asked God to let him try the fleece again. He said, "To-night, let the fleece alone be dry, and all the ground wet, and then I shall know that thou wilt save Israel." God again attended to Gideon; and the next morning, all the ground was wet with dew, and the wool alone was dry. Was this wonderful? Yes, it was a miracle God alone could do; and when Gideon saw it, he felt he might trust his powerful, kind, and wonderful God. His faith was strong now, for he thought, if this powerful friend were with him, he need not fear the Midianites.

Gideon was not going to fight alone; he had many thousand men with him. But God wished to teach the Israelites that their soldiers had no power to gain the victory, and that He alone could save them; and so He told Gideon to say to the soldiers, that if they were afraid, they might return home, and not come to the battle; and 22,000 went away. They could not have had much faith in God, nor much holy courage; they were weak, fearful men, who would not have helped Gideon to fight against the enemy. The army was small now; only

10,000 men; but God said, "I do not want so many; if all these soldiers go, the Israelites will say that their own power and courage gained the victory. Bring the 10,000 down to the water, and let them drink; notice the men who lap the water like a dog, and put them on one side; and the men who kneel down to drink water, put on the other side; and I will tell thee whom I choose to fight against the Midianites." Gideon obeyed God, without murmuring, or asking why. He brought all the soldiers to the water, and told them to drink. A few of them lapped, putting their hands to their mouths; but all the others stooped down on their knees to drink. Gideon counted those who lapped; they were 300. Then God said, "By the 300 men who lapped will I save you; let all the others return home."

Gideon had a very, very small army now. The Midianites were in great numbers; the Israelites only 300. Was he frightened? No; he had no need to fear, for God was with him, and He was stronger than all. Perhaps when Gideon looked upon the great army of the Midianites, he felt fearful; but when he looked up to God in faith and prayer, his fear was gone, because he knew he might trust in Him. Try to be like Gideon; and when you are in trouble, or sorrow, or difficulty, look to God for deliverance, and to Him alone.

LXXX.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE BATTLE.

IT was night. To-morrow, Gideon and his army must go and fight against their cruel enemies the Midianites. How did Gideon feel? A battle is a very dangerous thing. Gideon could not tell who might be killed; perhaps he might die, perhaps some of his dear friends; but he did not fear, because God was with him, and had promised him the victory. Captains and commanders of armies may be quiet and happy, if they are ready to die; they need not be afraid in the most dangerous battle, if God be with them.

While Gideon was lying down to rest, and his 300 soldiers by him, he heard a voice calling to him. Who spoke? Was it an enemy come to kill him, and his little army? No, it was no enemy; it was Gideon's best Friend who spoke to him,—it was the voice of God. When all are asleep, the eye of God is still open; He never sleeps, but watches over His people, and keeps them in safety. How pleasant it is to be the people of God, and to have our kind Father and Friend to take care of us, when we are sleeping upon our beds, in the long dark night!

But why did God speak to Gideon? He came to comfort him. God knew all Gideon felt: all his fears and sorrows were remembered by Him; and now He came to encourage him before the battle began. God said to Gideon, "Arise, go down to the army of the Midianites. If thou fear to go alone, take Phurah thy servant with thee; go and hear

what the Midianites say, and afterwards thou shalt feel strengthened to go down to the army." So Gideon and his servant Phurah went directly, as God commanded. They went, without fear, very near to their enemies, because they knew that God was with them, and would keep them safely. The tents of the Midianites and the Amalekites covered all the valley; they were very many. The soldiers were sleeping in the tents, and their camels lay by them; they were so many, Gideon could not count them. But the Midianites were not all asleep; some were keeping watch, and some were making ready for the morrow, and some were talking; but none of them saw Gideon and his servant. There were two men, Midianites, talking together, and Gideon and Phurah went near to them, to hear what they said. One man was telling his dream to his friend; he said, "I dreamed that I saw a cake of bread tumble into the hosts of the Midianites; I saw it fall upon a tent, and the tent was overturned, and thrown down." His friend answered, "That cake of bread is Gideon, the commander of the Israelites; he will fall upon us, and destroy our army, because God is with him." When Gideon heard what the man said, he rejoiced, and thanked and worshipped God. He felt now sure of the victory. Then he and Phurah went back to the Israelites, and Gideon said, "Arise, for God gives the Midianites into our hand."

God, who gave peace and comfort to Gideon and his little army, put fear and sorrow into the hearts of the Midianites. He sent a voice of love to His friends; He sent fearful dreams to frighten His enemies.

LXXXI

GIDEON'S VICTORY.



GIDEON divided his army into three companies, and gave every man a trumpet and a pitcher, and a lamp in every pitcher. They had no swords, nor spears, nor bows, nor arrows. They had God to fight for them, and they did not want arms. Then Gideon said, "Come with me, and do as I do. When I blow with the trumpet, you must blow too, and cry, 'The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.'" The people did not murmur at Gideon's command, for they were humble and obedient servants and soldiers of God. He had taught them to trust and to obey.

It was still night when Gideon went again, with his soldiers, to the camp of the Midianites. They all stood round the camp, and when Gideon commanded, they blew with the trumpets, and broke the pitchers, and cried aloud, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." The Midianites heard the noise, and the shout, and were very much frightened, for God had made them fear. They knew not what to do; they were like wild mad men. They all fell one upon another, and killed their own friends, and fathers, and brothers, and those who were not killed fled away, and the Israelites followed after them, and killed them. Gideon took the two kings of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb, and put

them both to death, and cut off their heads. Then he came to Jordan, and took two more kings of Midian, Zeba and Zalmunna, and killed them.

When Gideon had gained all these victories, the Israelites came and thanked him. They felt very grateful for all he had done, and they said, "Come and rule over us, and be our king, and we will serve and obey thee." But Gideon was not an ambitious man; he did not want power, nor riches, nor possessions; he wanted only to be useful. We read in history about many great conquerors, who fought battles, and conquered enemies, and gained victories, because they wished to be rich, and powerful, and to have great possessions; they were ambitious, selfish men; they thought only of pleasing themselves, not of pleasing God, nor of being useful. But Gideon was not like these men. He was a servant of God; and God's servants must be meek and humble, like Jesus Christ. So when the Israelites asked Gideon to be king, he said, "No, I do not wish to rule over you; the Lord is your king; obey Him." But Gideon asked them to give him all the earrings and gold chains, which they had taken from their enemies. The people said, "Yes, we will willingly give them;" and they spread out a large garment, and threw into it all the

earrings and chains they had, a very great number, and purple garments, and many more beautiful things. Gideon took all, and made them into an ephod like Aaron's ephod, and took it into his own city Ophrah. Gideon made the ephod in remembrance of his victory. He was right to remember God's kindness in giving him the victory, but it was very wrong to make an ephod, a holy garment which God commanded the priests alone to wear.

This was the beginning of idolatry. The Israelites now learnt to worship in their own way at Ophrah,

and not in the right way at Shiloh, the place appointed by God. Gideon was a good man, but when he trusted in his own strength, he did wrong. The best people sin often, and should always be coming to God to ask for pardon for the past, and grace for the future. If Gideon sinned, we may believe he prayed for forgiveness, and that God heard his prayer, and pardoned him. But it must have grieved him very much to see his family and his people learning idolatry through his sin. He died a very old man, and was buried in his father's tomb at Ophrah.

LXXXII.

A B I M E L E C H .



AFTER Gideon was dead, the Israelites again forgot God, and worshipped idols. They had none now to warn them, and they were glad to have their own way. We do not worship images, as the Israelites did; but we often forget God, and love the world, and ourselves, and our pleasures, better than we love Him. If we love anything better than we love God, we make an idol of it. Many people make idols of money, and possessions, and self; and they serve them, as the Israelites served Baal.

Gideon had many sons, but they were not like him. The name of one was Abimelech. He was a very ambitious man, and wanted to be king. He went to Shechem, and asked the people there, to let him reign over them. The men of Shechem were pleased with Abimelech,

and they attended to what he said and gave him money, and promised to make him king. Then he went home to Ophrah, and called his brothers together, and killed them upon one stone; all but the youngest, named Jotham, who hid himself, and escaped. Why did Abimelech kill his brothers? Because he feared they might wish to reign too, and he wanted to be king alone.

When the brothers were dead, the men of Shechem made Abimelech king. He reigned three years; and his brother Jotham lived far away from him, because he was afraid of Abimelech. Was Abimelech very happy when he was king? No; wicked men cannot be very happy; power and riches cannot make them so.

The people in Shechem soon grew tired of their cruel king. God remembered all that Abimelech had

done to his brothers; and now He was going to punish him. The people in Shechem rebelled, and would obey Abimelech no more. So Abimelech came and fought against them, and conquered the rebellious Shechemites. Some of them escaped to an idol temple, and hid there. But Abimelech and his soldiers cut down boughs from the tree, and put the boughs under the place where the people were hid, and set it on fire; and the people were all burnt to death. Then Abimelech went to a city named Thebez, and tried to take it. The people in Thebez went up to a high strong tower; and Abimelech was under the tower fighting against it. Then a woman on the top of the tower took a very large millstone, and threw it down upon Abimelech's head. Abimelech was much hurt by the stone, and felt that he must soon die, and he cried to a soldier near him, "Thrust thy sword into me, and slay me; for I

will not let people say that a woman killed me." So the soldier thrust his sword into him, and Abimelech fell down dead. God punished this wicked, proud, ambitious man, and all the wicked people who had helped him.

It is a fearful thing to make God angry; He always punishes His enemies. Perhaps he spares them a long time, and lets them live many years in sin and cruelty; but if they do not repent, He must punish them at last. He sees the wicked things people do, and writes all down in the book of His remembrance. All our sins are there; and in the day of judgment it must be opened, and read before the world, and before the holy angels. What can blot out our sins from that book? The blood of Jesus Christ alone. Ask forgiveness then from Him; and pray that your name may be written in the book of life, with those of all His people who love and serve Him.

LXXXIII.

JEPHTHAH.



HERE was a man in Gilead named Jephthah; he was very brave and warlike; but his brothers did not love him, and they sent him away, and would not let him live with them. Some years after, the Ammonites came and fought against Israel. Then the men of Gilead were very much frightened, and they sent for Jephthah, to help them to conquer their enemies. How very selfish these

Gileadites were! When they were in peace and safety, they could be unkind to their brother; but now, when they were in danger and sorrow, they wished to have him to help them, and spoke kindly to him. Brotherly love, which the Bible teaches us, is *always* kind. We ought to love our friends, not because they are useful to us, but because God says, "Be ye kind one to another."

When Jephthah heard what the

messengers said, he answered, "Did you not hate me, and send me away; why do you come to me now when you are in trouble?" But the Gileadites promised to make Jephthah their captain, if he would come and fight for them. So Jephthah forgave their past unkindness, and went to them.

The Ammonites were very wicked people. They had always been enemies to Israel, and God commanded that they should be destroyed, and He promised to give their possessions to the Israelites. Jephthah sent to the Ammonites, and told them this; but they would not attend. Then Jephthah made ready to fight against them. But before he went to the battle, he asked God's help and made a promise to God, and said, "If thou wilt give me the victory, then the first thing I meet at the door of my house, when I return in peace, shall be the Lord's; and I will offer it up for a burnt offering." Jephthah was right to ask God's help; but he made his vow too hastily, without thinking if it were wise to make it, or not.

The Ammonites were soon conquered, and very many of them killed, because God fought for the Israelites; and when the battle was ended Jephthah went home again to Mizpeh. Jephthah had one child, a daughter; he had no more children, and she was very dear to him. This daughter loved her father very much. And when she heard of the victory, she thought she should soon see her dear father again. So she waited and looked for him, and when she saw him coming, she ran out to

meet him, dancing and singing for joy. Was Jephthah glad to see her? No, he was very sorry; he rent his clothes, and cried, "O my daughter, thou troublest me; for I have made a promise to the Lord, and I cannot break my vow." But his daughter said, "My father, do not weep; if thou hast made a vow to the Lord, do to me as thou hast promised. God has been very merciful to us, and I am ready and willing to bear all thou hast vowed to do."

Jephthah thought now of his foolish vow, and was sorry that he had made it. He must give up his dear daughter, and never see her again! But first she asked to go upon the mountains, and to mourn there with her friends. Her father let her go; and, after two months, she came home again, and Jephthah did with her as he had vowed.

What did he do? The Bible does not say. Perhaps he killed her in sacrifice; perhaps he sent her far away, alone, where she could spend all her time in the service of God. Jephthah was right to be so thankful to God; he was right to love God better than all the world, better even than his dear child; but if he sacrificed his daughter, Jephthah did wrong. God does not want such sacrifices; He only wants praise, and thankfulness, and love.

Jephthah's daughter was an obedient, affectionate child; she was willing to be given up to God; to die or to live, as her father pleased. We should try to be like her in obedience and devotedness to God. He does not wish us to be sacrificed, nor to live alone, far away from our

friends and homes; God does not wish all this; but he wants our hearts, our love; He wants us to obey His will, and to be ready to live or die as He pleases.

LXXXIV.

M A N O A H .

EPHTHAH judged Israel six years, and then died. And now the people began again to sin against the Lord, and He gave them up to their enemies the Philistines for forty years. This was a long time to be in sorrow and trouble; but the Israelites deserved punishment. Many times they had displeased God, and now He showed them again the evil of sin, by letting them suffer. But God did not forget His people, though He punished them; He knew how to deliver at the right time, and He had a deliverer ready to save them when He pleased.

There was a good man in the tribe of Dan, named Manoah. He and his wife both served God. They had no child. One day, an angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife, and said, "Soon God will give thee a son, who shall deliver Israel from the Philistines. No razor must come upon him, for he shall be a Nazarite unto God."

Who were the Nazarites? They were people who had made a vow to give themselves to God. They did not drink wine, nor any strong liquor; and they never cut their hair nor shaved their heads.

Manoah's wife wondered very much to hear what the angel said, and she went and told her husband.

Manoah believed it all, for he had great faith in God. He knew that nothing was too wonderful for God to do: and he felt very thankful for God's promise to deliver Israel by the child who should soon be born. But Manoah feared that he and his wife might forget what the angel had said, and not bring up their child rightly; so he prayed God to send the angel to them again, to tell them what they must do.

God heard Manoah's prayer. A few days after, the woman was sitting alone in the field, and she looked up, and saw the angel again standing by her; then she ran directly, and called her husband. Manoah followed his wife, and came to the angel, and asked, "What shall we do to the child when he is born?" The angel told them what he had told the woman before, and then Manoah said, "Stay here till we have made ready a kid for thee." The angel answered, "I will not eat of thy bread; and if thou wilt offer a sacrifice, offer it to God." Manoah did not know who the angel was, and he asked again, "What is thy name?" But the angel answered, "Why dost thou ask my name? It is a very secret, and a very wonderful name." Then Manoah offered a kid in sacrifice to the Lord upon the rock, and God sent fire upon the sacrifice to consume

it, and Manoah and his wife looked at the angel, and they saw him going up to heaven in the flame of fire. Then they both fell upon their faces in holy fear and wonder, and Manoah said, "Now we shall die, because we have seen God."

The woman said to her husband, "Do not be afraid. God has just

shown us wonderful things, and has accepted our sacrifice, and He can not surely wish to hurt or frighten us." No, the Lord never does anything to hurt His people; He comes to them in love; and they are happy people who have Jesus for their Friend, as Manoah and his wife had.

LXXXV.

SAMSON'S FEAST.



MANOAH and his wife did not afterwards see the angel of the Lord; but God remembered His promise, and very soon sent them a little son, and they called him Samson. Samson's parents were very careful to attend to all God's commands about him. They remembered that he was to be given to God; that he was to be a Nazarite; to drink no wine; and not to shave his head, nor cut his hair. Samson was wonderfully strong. God had given him great strength, because He had much for him to do; he was to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

When Samson was grown up, he went to Timnath with his father and mother, to marry a young woman who was a Philistine. As he passed the vineyards of Timnath, a lion rushed out of the woods, and began to roar against him. Was Samson frightened? No; he was a very bold man, and he ran to the lion, and tore it to pieces, without a stick, or sword, or spear; with his great strength alone. Samson said

nothing to his father or mother, but went on, and came to Timnath.

After a time, Samson passed again along the place where he had killed the lion, and he went and looked at the dead body of the animal. What did he see there? Some wild bees had made their nest in the lion, and Samson found much honey there; so he took it, and ate, and gave some to his father and mother; but he did not tell them where he found it.

Samson made a feast at Timnath; and when the company were all talking merrily together, he said, "I will give you a riddle to guess; if you guess right, I will give you thirty sheets, and thirty garments; but if you cannot guess, you shall give me thirty sheets and thirty garments." Then the people said, "Tell us the riddle, and we will try to guess it." Samson said, "Out of the eater came forth meat; and out of the strong came forth sweetness." The eater was the strong lion; and the meat was the sweet honey Samson found in it: but no one knew the story of the lion, and

they could not guess the riddle. They tried six days, and then they called their friend, Samson's wife, and said, "Ask Samson to explain the riddle to thee, or else we will burn thee and thy father's house with fire." The woman asked her husband, and at last he explained

the riddle to her, and she went directly and told the Philistines. Then they came to Samson, and said, "What is so strong as a lion, and what is so sweet as honey?" But Samson said, "My wife told you, or you could not have guessed my riddle."

LXXXVI

SAMSON AND THE PHILISTINES.



SAMSON was obliged to give what he promised to the men who found out the riddle. But how did he get the garments and the sheets? He went down to Askelon, and killed thirty men of the Philistines, and took from them what he wanted to give to the men who told the riddle. Soon after, Samson's wife was taken away from him, and then Samson began to be very angry with the Philistines. He caught 300 foxes, and tied firebrands at their tails, and drove them into the corn fields belonging to the Philistines; and all the corn, and vineyards, and olives were burnt. Then the Philistines asked, "Who did this?" The people said, "Samson did it, because his wife has been taken away;" and the Philistines went, and burnt Samson's wife and her father with fire. Then Samson was still more angry, and he killed a great number of the Philistines, and then went to the top of a rock, and lived there.

The Philistines now went to fight against Judah, and they said they must have Samson, and bind him, and take him prisoner. The peo-

ple of Judah were frightened, and they went up to Samson, and said, "We are come to bind thee; we will not kill thee; but we will give thee into the hands of the Philistines." Then they bound him with two new ropes, and led him away. But God gave Samson strength to break the ropes, and he soon escaped, and took up the jawbone of an ass, which he found on the way, and with it killed 1000 men of the Philistines.

After the slaughter, Samson was very thirsty, and he cried to God, and thanked Him for deliverance, and asked for water, that he might not die of thirst. It was right of Samson to go to God in his troubles. We ought always to tell Him when we are in want, and ask Him to give us what is right. God heard Samson's prayer. He caused water to spring up like a well, and Samson drank, and became strong again.

God raised up Samson to deliver his country from the Philistines, and He gave him great strength, and boldness, and courage to do it. Samson was not so meek, and gentle, and kind, as many people of whom we read in the Bible. He was not like Abraham, nor Moses;

sometimes he was revengeful and passionate; but we may hope, that Samson was a true servant of God, and that he trusted in Him for strength to fight against his enemies.

LXXXVII.

SAMSON TAKEN.

SOON after, Samson went to Gaza. The people heard he was there, and they waited quietly for him all night, and said, "In the morning we shall kill him." But Samson arose in the night, and went to the gate of the city, and took it up, and the posts, and the bar, and carried them upon his shoulders to the top of a hill near Hebron. What wonderful strength Samson had! Who gave it to him? God, who gives us all our good things. And why did God give so much strength to Samson? Because He had chosen Samson to conquer the Philistines, and to deliver His people Israel.

Samson had now another wife; her name was Delilah. The Philistines wanted very much to know what made Samson strong, and they went to Delilah, and said, "Ask Samson what makes him so strong, and how we can bind him; and we will each give thee 1100 pieces of silver." Delilah did not care much for her husband, and she was very fond of money; so she went to Samson, and asked him to tell her what made him so strong. Samson did not wish her to know, and he deceived her, and said, "Let them bind me with seven fresh green withes." Then Delilah told the Philistines, and they brought

the withes, and she bound Samson with them, and the Philistines waited secretly hid in the room. Then Delilah cried, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson;" and Samson broke the withes directly, and the Philistines could not bind him. Then Delilah asked Samson again, to tell her what made him so strong; and he said, "Let them bind me with new ropes." Delilah bound him with the ropes, and cried again, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson," and he broke the ropes like little threads, and escaped again. Then Delilah said, "Now do not deceive me, tell me the truth; how shall I bind thee?" He said, "Weave the hair of my head with the web." When Samson was asleep, Delilah wove his hair, and fastened it very strongly; then she told him the Philistines were coming, and he awoke directly, and went away with the pin, and the beam, and the web. Then Delilah said, "Why hast thou deceived me these three times? Tell me now where thy great strength lies?" Samson was tired of his wife's asking him so often; and he now told her all the truth. He said, "I am a Nazarite to God! and I have never shaven my head; but, if my hair is cut off, then shall I become weak like other men." Then Delilah sent to the Philistines, and said, "Come once again; Samson

has told me the truth ; I know now what it is makes him so strong."

The lords of the Philistines were very glad to think that they should soon have their enemy in their power ; and they came directly, and brought money with them to give Delilah. Then the cruel wife, when Samson was asleep, called a man, and told him to shave off all Samson's hair ; and when he had finished, Delilah cried, "The Philistines are upon thee, Samson." Samson arose, but his strength was gone ; God had taken it all away. He could not defend himself now ; and his enemies came, and took him, and put out his eyes, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Gaza, and made him work hard in the prison there.

He ought not to have told his secret, nor to let his hair be shaved, because God had commanded that no razor should come on his head. God punished him by taking away his strength. Delilah was not a kind and affectionate friend to her husband, but his deceitful wicked enemy.

This world is full of sorrow. We cannot trust to anything in it. Our friends may forsake us, and become unkind ; our health and strength may be taken away ; we may lose all we have, and be left sick, and sorrowful, and have none to comfort us. Then we ought not to set our affections on anything here, but put our trust in God ; He alone will never forsake us.

LXXXVIII.

SAMSON'S DEATH.

SAMSON was now in prison at Gaza, alone and blind, without any friend to comfort him. He had much time then to think about God, and to pray for the pardon of all his sins.

God often afflicts His people ; but He afflicts them in love. He wants them to pray to Him, and to love Him more. When they are well and busy, they often forget God ; they think too much about worldly things, and too little about heavenly things ; and then God sends affliction to make them remember Him. Perhaps He makes them lie many days upon a bed of sickness ; or He takes away their friends, or their

comforts, and then they are left alone and in sorrow, like Samson in his prison-house. God sends all these sorrows. Why ? Does God like to see His people unhappy, and in pain ? No ; "God is love ;" and when He sends affliction He sends it in love. He wishes His people to forget the world and worldly things, and to love and trust in Him only ; and He gives them time and quiet, when they are sick and alone, to think about Him, and to pray to Him.

Perhaps Samson had been very proud of his great strength ; now he had lost it, and God taught him that he had no power in himself : all the strength Samson had, God

gave, and God could take away. When Samson first went to prison, his strength was all gone; but after a time, his hair began to grow, and then his strength came again.

The Philistines worshipped an ugly idol like a fish, named Dagon. They made a great sacrifice to Dagon, and praised him, because they thought he had given Samson into their hands. They were very merry, playing, and laughing, and feasting, and praising their idol; and they said, "Let us call Samson, and we will play with him, and laugh at him, and make merry." Then Samson was led in; he could not see his cruel enemies, and they all laughed at him, because he was blind, and weak, and in their power; and they made him stand between two pillars.

The house where they were was very large, and full of people; men, and women, and children; and about 3000 of them were upon the roof, looking and wondering at Samson. Samson asked the boy who led him, to let him lean upon the pillars on

which the house stood, and he took hold of one with his right hand, and of the other with his left hand. Then Samson prayed to God, and said, "Lord, give me now strength to conquer my enemies; let them die, and let me die with them." Then Samson bowed himself down with all his might, and pulled the pillars, and they fell, and the house, and the people who were upon the roof. All died, and Samson died too. He had killed many people who were his enemies, when he was alive and strong; and now, at his death, he killed many more.

God punished the wicked Philistines, because they were cruel to Samson, and enemies of Israel. God knows how to save His people. He gave Samson strength to save Israel from the Philistines. If we have strength and health, we must try to use them rightly, and to do good to other people, and not be idle and selfish. It is God who gives us every thing, and we must thank Him and serve Him with all we have.

LXXXIX.

NAOMI AND RUTH.



HERE lived in Bethlehem a man named Elimelech; he had a wife named Naomi, and two sons, named Mahlon and Chilion. Elimelech and his family lived many years very happily at Bethlehem; but after a time, God sent a famine upon the land, and all the people there were very much distressed. It is God who gives us corn

for bread, and sends us the fruits of the earth at the right season; we ought to be very thankful for all these mercies. But sometimes God is pleased not to send rain, or not to give us sunshine; and then the corn does not grow up, nor ripen, and we have no flour to make bread, and there is a famine. But in all our wants we ought to trust in God; because He has power to give us

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THE WOMAN WHO SAVED THE WORLD



Francesco Hayez

what we need, and without Him not a sparrow can fall to the ground.

When the famine was very bad in Bethlehem, Elimelech and his family went to Moab to live there. Were they right to go? No; because the people of Moab were wicked idolators. God's people ought not to go to places where they may learn to sin.

When they came to Moab, Mahlon and Chilion married wives of the women of Moab; they were idolators, and their names were Orpah and Ruth. Mahlon and Chilion did not live long; they both died, and Elimelech died too; and Naomi was left with her two daughters-in-law. She had none to comfort her; all around were idolators, and she wished to be in her own country again, where she might hear about God.

When the famine was over, Naomi said she would return to her own land. Orpah and Ruth were both very kind and affectionate to Naomi, and they said they would go with her; but Naomi did not wish to take her daughters to a new country, against their will; and she wished to try their love for her; so she said "No, my daughters, do not go with me; go home to your own country, and to your parents, and your friends, and may God deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead, and with me."

Then Naomi kissed them, and they both wept, and said, "We will surely go with thee to Bethlehem." But Naomi said again, "Nay, my daughters, return to your homes; why will you go with me?" Then they wept again, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, and went away. Did not Ruth go? No; she threw her arms around Naomi, and would not leave her. But Naomi said, 'See, Orpah is gone home to her friends, and to her gods; return thou after her.' Then Ruth answered, "O do not tell me to go away; let me follow thee: where thou goest, I will go; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, I will die, and there will I be buried; only death shall part thee and me." Naomi was very happy to hear Ruth say this, for Naomi loved God, and she wished Ruth to love Him too.

Young people should try to be like Ruth; gentle, and affectionate, and humble. Orpah was affectionate and kind; but she loved her idols and her country people best, and could not leave them. Ruth left all, because she loved best the worship of the true God. Do you wish to love God? Then you must leave the things of the world, and the people who do not love God; and give yourself up to his service, and try to be with those who love and serve Him.

XC.

THE HARVEST FIELD.



NAOMI and Ruth went on together, and come to Bethlehem. Bethlehem had been Naomi's home; and many of her old friends still lived there. When they heard that Naomi was come, they all ran to see her. But when they looked at her, they said, "Is this Naomi?" Why did they ask? Because Naomi was so very much altered. When she lived before at Bethlehem, she was happy with her husband and her sons; but now, they were all gone, and she was left alone. She told her friends the sad story, that God had taken away her husband and her sons; and now she was a poor widow, and had come home to die in her own country.

When Naomi and Ruth came to Bethlehem, it was harvest time, and the people were all very busy reaping barley. It is pleasant to see the men reaping the yellow corn, and binding it in sheaves; and then the poor people are glad to follow them, and gather up the corn left on the ground.

When Ruth was living at home with Naomi, she did not wish to be idle. Idleness is a great sin. The Bible tells us not to be slothful;

and all God's people must try to be industrious and useful. What work did Ruth do? She said, "Let me go and glean in the fields;" and Naomi answered, "Go, my daughter." All the people in Bethlehem were strangers to Ruth; she had no friends there; but when she went out to glean, God was with her, and He led her to the right field. God is always near His people; and if they trust to Him, He will teach them where to go, and what to do. When we go out, we ought to ask God to go with us, and to keep and bless us wherever we go.

Ruth gleaned in a field which belonged to a man named Boaz. The reapers let her glean, and Ruth was very industrious, and did not stand idle. Boaz soon came to the field to see the reapers, and he said to them, "The Lord be with you." And they answered, "The Lord bless thee." Boaz was a servant of God; he loved and worshipped Him himself, and he taught His people to serve Him too. When Boaz saw his beautiful field, and his busy reapers, he remembered who gave him all his possessions; and he wished his servants to think about God when they were at work.

XCL

B O A Z .



WHEN Boaz looked round the field, he saw Ruth very busy gleaning, and he asked who she was.

His servant said, "It is the damsel who came with Naomi from Moab." Then Boaz went to her, and said, "Stay here with my maidens, and follow them, and glean after the reapers; and when thou art thirsty, go and drink what my servants have drawn." Ruth wondered at the kindness of Boaz, whom she had never seen before, and she fell down humbly before him, and asked, "Why dost thou show so much kindness to me a stranger?" Then Boaz said, "Because I have heard all thou hast done to thy mother-in-law: thou hast left thy home to go with her, and thou hast chosen the Lord to be thy God, and put thy trust in Him. May He bless and reward thee." Then Ruth thanked Boaz. She was not proud of her goodness. She knew she was a sinner, and deserved nothing; but she felt thankful to God, who gave her kind friends in a strange country.

When it was meal-time, Boaz told Ruth to sit by his servants, and eat; and when she had finished, she went again directly to her work. Ruth did not eat all the food given her, but put some away for her mother-in-law, and when it was evening, she took up her barley, and went home. She did not stay talking and idling, for she knew that her mother was alone; so she made haste to go to her. Then

Naomi asked, "Where hast thou gleaned to-day?" and Ruth told her all about Boaz, and his kindness in letting her glean in his field. Naomi was much pleased to hear this; and she told Ruth, that Boaz was her relation, and that she felt sure he would be kind to them, and help them.

All the harvest time, Ruth went every day to glean in the fields of Boaz, and came home every evening, with corn and food for Naomi. Were they happy? Yes, because they lived together in the love of God. They were poor, but they knew that God could keep them, and they trusted in Him. Riches cannot make us happy; but God's blessing can make us happy without them.

At last, harvest time was over, and what could Ruth do then? There was no more corn to glean. but God did not forget her. She had given herself up to Him, and He promises always to take care of His people. Naomi's relation, Boaz, was very fond of Ruth. He loved her, because she loved God, and because she was industrious, and dutiful, and attentive to Naomi. Elimelech had had a possession in Canaan, and Boaz said, he would buy that possession, and marry Ruth according to a custom among the Israelites. So Boaz and Ruth married, and were happy together, because they both served God, and His blessing was upon them. They had a little son named Obed. Naomi loved this child, and she took

him in her arms, and nursed him, and praised God who had made them all so happy, and given them so many blessings.

Obed lived to grow up to be a

man. He was the father of Jesse, and the grandfather of David king of Israel; and many kings descended from him. Thus God honored his faithful servants.

XCII.

HANNAH'S PRAYER.



HERE was a man named Elkanah, who lived at Mount Ephraim. He worshipped the true God, and every year went with his family to sacrifice to the Lord at Shiloh. Elkanah had a wife named Hannah, and she loved God too. Was Hannah happy? One thing made her sorry: she had no child, and she wished very much to have a son.

One year, when Elkanah and his family went to Shiloh, Hannah felt very sad, and she determined to tell her sorrow to God. So when the sacrifice was ended at Shiloh, Hannah went and prayed to the Lord. She cried very much when she prayed, and vowed a vow, and said, "If thou, Lord, wilt give me a son, I will bring him up for thy service. He shall be a Nazarite to thee all his life." Hannah was not alone when she prayed; the old priest

was sitting by; his name was Eli. Eli looked at Hannah while she was praying, and he saw her lips moving, but he could not hear what she said, and he spoke unkindly to her, and asked her what she was doing. Hannah told the priest, that she was unhappy, and that she was telling God all her sorrows, and asking Him to comfort her. Eli was very glad to find that Hannah prayed with her heart, and not with her lips alone; and he blessed her, and asked God to hear her prayer. Then Hannah thanked Eli, and wiped away her tears, and went home with her husband.

Hannah was now "no more sad." She had told God her sorrow, and asked Him to give her a child; and she waited for Him to do as He pleased. She knew that what God does is right and best; and she trusted all to Him, and was happy

XCIII

LITTLE SAMUEL.



DID God hear Hannah's prayer? Yes; and soon after He gave her a little son. She named him Samuel.

And now Hannah remembered her vow to give her child to God. When he was old enough to go away from her she carried him to Shiloh, to the Lord's house there. Then Hannah went to Eli, and gave the little boy to him, and said, "I am the woman who prayed here some time ago. I asked God then to give me a son, and He has heard my prayer. Here is my child; I have lent him to the Lord: as long as he lives he shall be lent unto the Lord." It was a happy day at Shiloh, when Samuel was brought there. Elkanah rejoiced, and Hannah, and Eli too, and they all worshipped God; and Hannah sang a beautiful song of praise.

Hannah left her little boy at Shiloh, and went home to Ramah with her husband. Was she sorry to leave Samuel? No, because she knew that God would bless her child, and that Eli would teach him what was right. Little Samuel was very obedient, and gentle, and kind, and affectionate to old Eli. Every year his mother came to Shiloh to sacrifice, and then she saw her little boy. She made him a little coat, and brought it to him when she came to Shiloh. Eli and Hannah taught Samuel what was right, and they prayed God to bless him, and God heard their prayer. Parents

and teachers cannot give children new hearts; but God promises to hear the prayers they offer for them in faith.

Samuel grew, and God loved him, and all his friends loved him too. Eli had two sons; they were not little boys, like Samuel, but grown up; and they were priests in the house of the Lord at Shiloh. God's priests ought to be very good and holy men: but Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's sons, were very wicked men; they did not love nor obey God. Their father Eli knew that they were wicked, and he called them, and said, "My sons, I hear no good report of you. You sin against the Lord, and teach his people to do wrong. Why will you do such things?" But Hophni and Phinehas would not attend to their father; but became more and more wicked. Eli was very unhappy when he saw his sons so self-willed and disobedient. But was he right to let his wicked sons stay and be priests at Shiloh? No, Eli did very wrong; he ought to have punished them and sent them away, and not let them be priests; but Eli foolishly indulged his children, and did not like to punish them.

Then God said, He would punish Eli, and slay Hophni and Phinehas in one day. Eli was a good man, but God punished him because he let his sons go on in wickedness, and honored them more than he honored God.

XCIV.

SAMUEL CALLED.



SAMUEL was still living with Eli; and he was kind and obedient, when Eli's own sons were rebellious and self-willed.

Samuel did not know much about God, but he wished to know more, and he was glad and attentive when Eli told him about holy things.

One night, when Samuel was in bed, he heard a voice calling, "Samuel, Samuel." It was God who called; but Samuel did not know this, because God had never called him before. So Samuel arose directly, and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for thou calledst me." But Eli answered, "No, my son, I called not; lie down again." Then Samuel went again and lay down; but soon the voice called the second time, "Samuel." Samuel still thought it was Eli's voice, and he went again to the old priest, and said, "Here I am." But Eli said, "My dear child, I did not call; go and lie down again." Samuel obeyed; he wondered who had called him: but he did not ask questions; he did what Eli told him, and lay down quietly in his bed. Did God call again? Yes; the third time, He said, "Samuel, Samuel." Was not Samuel tired of running to Eli? No, he went again to him directly; he was not

impatient because he was called so often.

When Eli saw Samuel running to him again, he began to think it was God who had called the child. So he said, "Go, and lie down; and, if He call again, thou shalt say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." So Samuel went back, and lay down; wondering why the holy God should speak to him, a poor sinful boy. Did the voice call again? Yes, the Lord called the fourth time, "Samuel, Samuel." Then the boy arose, and looked up humbly to Heaven, and said, "Speak, for thy servant heareth."

It is very pleasant when children early learn to serve and love God, like Samuel. God calls children now. How? Does He speak to them with a loud voice, and call them by their names? No; they cannot hear His *voice*; but He speaks to them in His *word*, in the Bible. What does He say? He says, "My son, give me thine heart." *Prov. xxiii. 26.* "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." *Prov. viii. 17.* "Seek ye my face." *Ps. xxvii. 8.* Do you wish to have God for your friend and saviour? Then you must, like Samuel, attend to Him, and obey Him, and say, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

XCV.

ELI'S SONS.



WHAT did God say, when He called Samuel the fourth time? God had something very sad to tell Samuel. He said He was going soon to do a fearful thing in Israel:—to punish Eli and his family, because his sons were wicked, and he restrained them not.

When it was light, Samuel arose. He was not an idle boy; he had work to do, and he always did it in good time: it was his business, in the morning, to open the doors of the Lord's house. He was very sorry to make Eli unhappy; and he did not tell him what God had said for a long time. But the old priest saw Samuel looking very sad; and he called him, and said, "My son, what did God tell thee last night? Do not fear to speak; I wish to know the truth; tell me all." Then Samuel remembered that it is very wrong to say what is untrue; so he told Eli all that God had said. Samuel was sorry to make his dear, kind friend unhappy; but he knew that it was

right to tell the truth. He spoke very humbly, and kindly, and respectfully, because he remembered that Eli was an old man, and it is right for children to be kind and respectful to old people.

Eli knew that God had spoken, and he felt that all was right. Everything God does must be right, because He is so wise, and good, and holy. Then Eli said, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." Eli did well to submit; if God punishes us, we ought to be humble and patient; but when Eli thought about his sin, he felt unhappy. What was his sin? His sons were wicked, and he did not restrain them. The Bible tells parents to teach children what is right, and to punish them when they do wrong. Kind parents always reprove their children when they are self-willed and rebellious; and the children ought to be thankful to their parents, and teachers, and friends, who try to bring them up aright.

XCVI.

ELI'S DEATH.



SAMUEL grew, and every day he learnt more and more about God. He was God's child, and God kept him, and made him wise in holy things. It is very pleasant when children grow older, and better too: but some grow worse, and not better. Eli's sons grew worse, more and more wicked every day. God did not bless Israel now; they were wicked, and the priests were wicked, and God was going to punish them all.

The Philistines came to fight against Israel, and there was a great battle. Who conquered? Not the Israelites, because God did not fight for them, and without Him they had no power to conquer their enemies. The Philistines gained the victory; and 4,000 of the Israelites were killed. Then the people of Israel said, "Why does God let the Philistines conquer us? We will bring the ark from Shiloh, and take it to the camp; perhaps the ark will save us from our enemies." So they sent to Shiloh, and took away the ark, and brought it to the camp, and Hophni and Phinehas, Eli's two sons, came with it. The army of the Israelites shouted very loud when they saw the ark, for they thought they were now sure of the victory; but God could not bless wicked priests and disobedient people; He turned away, and would not help them.

When the Philistines saw the ark, they were frightened; for they thought it was the Israelites' god, an

idol-god, like Dagon, or Baal, and they told their soldiers to be very brave, and to fight against them with all their strength. Then the battle began; and the Israelites were beaten, and ran to their tents; and 30,000 were killed. Where were Hophni and Phinehas? Their dead bodies were found on the field; their souls were gone to appear before God, and to be judged for all their sins! And the holy ark was gone from Israel too; the Philistines took it away, and carried it to their own country; God showed His sinful people that he was not with them now.

Eli did not see the battle; he was too old to go so far; but he felt very unhappy, because he knew how angry God was, and he thought much about his wicked sons. He went to the gate of the city, and sat down there. All the people of Shiloh were unhappy too, and they waited trembling till the news came about the battle. At last, a man came running very fast from the army; and when the people looked at him, they saw that his clothes were rent, and dust was upon his head, and they knew that he brought very sad news. When the man told them that the battle was lost, all the people cried out; the cry was very loud, and very bitter, and Eli heard it. He could not see, for his eyes were dim with old age, he was ninety-eight years old, but he heard the noise, and he called the messenger, and asked, "What is the noise I hear? Why do the people cry?"

The messenger said, "I have just run from the army." Then Eli trembled very much, and asked, "What is done there? tell me." The man said, "The Israelites are conquered, Hophni and Phinehas are slain, and the ark of God is taken away." Eli heard it all; but when the messenger said that the ark was gone, he could bear no more; he did not look up, nor speak again; he fell back off his seat, and his neck broke, and he died. He could not bear so much sorrow. He had lost all his comforts; God's anger was upon the country; and the ark and the blessing of God were taken away.

XCVII.

DAGON AND THE ARK.

THE Philistines took away the ark from Ebenezer, where the battle was fought, and carried it to Ashdod, and put it in the temple of their idol Dagon. The Philistines thought that the ark was an idol like Dagon; but God soon showed them that it was very different.

When the Philistines came into the temple on the morrow morning, they saw Dagon fallen down before the ark; and they took him, and put him up again. But the next day, they found Dagon fallen down again, and his hands and his head broken to pieces. Who had done this? God did it to show the Philistines how powerful He was, and that their idol god could not stand before His holy ark. God punished the people too of Ashdod with a dreadful plague; and they were very much frightened, and said, the ark should not stay with them any longer, because it hurt them and their god Dagon.

Many people say in their hearts, "We do not want God: we do not like to pray, and to think of Him,

and to serve Him; we like our pleasures best, we like the world best." These people are like the Philistines, who sent away the holy ark, because they liked to serve Dagon better than the true God.

Where did the ark go? The Philistines sent it to Gath; but there God punished the people with the plague, and then they sent the ark to Ekron. When the people of Ekron saw it coming, they were frightened, and cried, "Take the ark away; we fear a plague will come with it; send it back to its own country." The ark was seven months in the Philistines' country, and many people died of the plague which God sent.

At last, the Philistines said, they would send the ark home: for they saw that the God of Israel was stronger than they, and they could not resist His power. So they made a new cart, and put the ark into it; two kine drew the cart. They took the right road to go to the land of Israel; they did not stand still; they went straight on, without turning to right or left.

XCVIII.

THE ARK.

THE kine drew the ark in the cart to Bethshemesh. The people there were very busy reaping: for it was harvest time. They heard something coming, and looked up, to see what it was. What did they see? The cart drawn by the kine, without a driver, coming to them along the road; and when they looked into the cart, there they saw the holy ark of God, which they had lost so long. Then the people in Bethshemesh rejoiced very much. The cart came close to them, and the kine stood still; and the Levites took out the ark, and put it upon a large stone. Then they cut up the cart for wood, and offered the kine in joyful sacrifice to God who had sent them His holy ark again. The lords of the Philistines, who followed the cart, saw all this, and wondered, and returned to their own country.

But a sad thing happened to Bethshemesh that day. The people were very pleased to have the ark again; but some of them forgot what a holy thing it was, and they went to it, and looked into it, very irreverently, without remembering that God had commanded them to honor it, and only allowed the Levites to touch it. The men of Bethshemesh made God angry; and He smote them; and 50,070 people died.

The people were very much frightened when they saw so many

of their friends dead, and said, "Who can stand before this holy Lord God?" Then they sent to Kirjath-jearim, and asked the people there to come and take the ark away. The men of Kirjath-jearim were glad to have it; and they brought it to the house of a man named Abinadab, and he consecrated his son to keep it; and it stayed there many years.

The Israelites now began to be sorry for their sins, and they cried to the Lord. God had punished them very much, and taken away the ark from them; but now they wanted to have God's blessing again, because they felt they could not be happy without it.

None can be happy without God's love and blessing. We have not the ark now to be with us, as it used to be with Israel, and we do not want it. We have Jesus Christ, and He is always with us, to bless us, if we are His people.

When the Israelites began to cry about their sins, they had a kind friend to teach them what to do. Who was that friend? Samuel; he was now a man, and God's love and blessing were still upon him. God taught him to speak to His people Israel. Samuel said, "Do you wish to serve God in truth, and to have His blessing again? If you do, you must put away your idols, and turn to God, and serve Him alone." Then the Israelites attended to Samuel, and put away their idols.

and began to serve the Lord. Samuel called them to Mizpeh, and there he prayed for them : and they prayed too, and asked for forgiveness, and cried, "We have sinned against the Lord."

XCIX.

EBEN-EZER.

WHEN the Philistines heard that the Israelites were gathered together at Mizpeh, they went there to fight against them. The Israelites were very much frightened when they heard that their enemies were coming, and they went for help to their kind friend Samuel. But the Israelites knew that Samuel himself had not power to save them : God alone could deliver them ; so they said to Samuel, "Pray for us to God, ask him to save us from the Philistines." Then Samuel took a lamb, and offered it up in faith, as a sacrifice to God, and prayed unto the Lord ; and the Lord heard him. But did the Philistines come to Mizpeh ? Yes ; while Samuel was offering the sacrifice, he looked up and saw the enemies coming nearer and nearer, and making ready for battle. Was he frightened ? No, because he trusted in God ; he knew God had power to deliver His people ; and when he remembered that, Samuel could not fear. The Israelites did not fight the Philistines, but God Himself fought, and conquered them. How ? Not with swords, nor spears, nor arrows : He sent a

great thunderstorm, and frightened the Philistines, and they fled ; and the Israelites followed, and killed them in great numbers.

When the Philistines were conquered, Samuel took a great stone, and set it up near Mizpeh. Why ? Because he wished all Israel to remember God's kindness to them in saving them from their enemies. When, in future years, the Israelites should look upon that stone, they would think, "Here God was merciful to us, and delivered us from our cruel enemies, the Philistines." Samuel gave the stone a name ; he called it Eben-ezer, which means, "the stone of help." Why did Samuel call the stone, a stone of help ? "Because," he said, "hitherto hath the Lord helped us." The Philistines were all gone ; they did not again come to trouble and frighten the Israelites ; and Samuel and the people were right to thank and praise God for all His mercies.

Let us remember that God is our help. He has taken care of us in past years ; and we must ask Him to take care of us in all our future years too, and to bring us safely at last to Heaven.

C.

THE NEW KING.



ANY years Samuel judged the people of Israel: and when they hearkened to him, and obeyed him, they were safe and happy, because he ruled over them rightly, and taught them to fear and love the Lord. But at last, Samuel grew an old man, and then his sons helped him to judge Israel. Samuel's sons were not like their good father. They loved money, and the things of the world, better than they loved God.

The Israelites said to Samuel, "Thou art old, and thy sons, who judge us now, are not like thee: give us a king to rule over us." Samuel was displeased when the Israelites said this; but he made no answer; he went first to ask God what was right. God was very angry with the people of Israel. He was their king; He gave them laws, and fought their battles, and took care of them and of their country; He was their best Friend and ruler; and they were ungrateful and rebellious, and foolish, too, to wish for a new king.

Samuel went again to the people, and told them what God had spoken.

Samuel told them they had made God angry; for he was their king, and they ought not to desire another; and a new king would not make them happy; he might be ambitious, and selfish, and cruel, and then they would cry for deliverance, when it would be too late. But the people did not care for what Samuel said, and for the kind warning he gave them; they cried out again, "We will have a king, we want to be like other nations; we want to fight battles, and to have a king to go with us." Then Samuel went again to God, and told him what the people said. And did God let them have their wish? Yes, He told Samuel to let the people have a king. But God was not pleased. He let His people have their own way; but He was punishing them, not blessing them.

We are weak and foolish, and we know not what is right or best for us. But God knows, and we ought to submit in all things to His will. When he takes away, or does not give us what we ask him for, we may be sure that it is best for us not to have it; and we ought to be patient, and submit quietly.

CL

S A U L.



HERE was a man of the tribe of Benjamin, named Kish, and he had a son called Saul. Saul was a very fine young man, and very tall; he was taller than any of the people. One day, some of the asses of Kish went astray, and were lost. Kish called his son Saul, and said, "Take a servant with thee, and go, seek the asses." Then Saul and his servant got ready, and went. They went a long way, but they could not see the asses; and Saul grew tired, and said to the servant, "Come, let us go home, for we cannot find the asses, and my father will begin to be frightened about us. The servant answered, "There is a good man living near who is a prophet, and a very wise man; shall we go to him first, and ask him our best way, and where we may find the asses?" Saul said, "Yes, let us go;" so they both went to the city where the prophet lived. This prophet was Samuel; he lived at Ramah, in Benjamin, where Saul and his servant were travelling.

When they came near the city, they met some young women going to draw water, and they asked, "Is the prophet here?" The young woman said, "Yes, he came to-day to a sacrifice in the city; he blesses the sacrifice before the people eat, and he is now going to the high place; make haste, and you will find

him." Saul and the servant went on, and soon came to the gate of the city, and there they saw an old man, and they went to him, and Saul asked, "Where is the prophet's house?" The old man said, "I am the prophet; my name is Samuel; come with me, and eat with me to-day, and to-morrow thou shalt go. Do not grieve about the asses, for they are found. I have much to tell thee; the desire of all Israel is on thee, and on thy father's house." Then Saul wondered and said, "Why dost thou speak so to me? My family is the least in the tribe of Benjamin."

Why did Samuel honor Saul so much? Because God had said to Samuel, "That is the man who shall reign over my people." Samuel honored Saul as his king; for though the Israelites did wrong in asking for a king, yet they were to love and respect him when God gave them their wish.

Samuel brought Saul and his servant into his house, and made them sit down to a great feast in his parlor: and Samuel told the cook to bring the best of the meat, and put it before Saul. Then Samuel said, "This is for thee; I kept it for thee, unto this time." When the feast was ended, Samuel called to Saul upon the top of the house. He said that the people wanted a king, and that God had chosen Saul to be the king.

OIL

SAUL MADE KING.



THE next morning, very early, Saul and his servant arose to go home, and Samuel went with them to the end of the city. Then Samuel told the servant to go on before, because he had a secret thing to say to Saul. When the servant was gone, and Samuel and Saul were alone, Samuel took a bottle of oil, and poured the oil upon Saul's head. Then he kissed Saul, and said, "God has chosen thee to be king, to rule over His people Israel;" and Samuel told Saul that he would soon meet a company of prophets, and that God would give him power to prophesy too. Then Samuel and Saul parted; Samuel went home, and Saul went on his way.

And now God gave great power and wisdom to Saul; he felt like a new man. Very soon he met the prophets, as Samuel had said, and Saul went among them, and began to prophesy too. Who taught Saul to prophesy? God; He gave him wisdom and knowledge, to help and strengthen him in the new work given him. All the people wondered very much to hear Saul prophesy, and they said, "What is this? Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Saul met his uncle soon after, and the uncle asked him and his servant, "Where have you been?" Saul said, "We went to seek my father's asses, which were lost. And when we could not find them, we went to the prophet Samuel, and he

told us that they were found." Saul did not tell his uncle what Samuel had said about the kingdom; he was right not to boast of his new honors.

Samuel now called all the people together to Mizpeh. He said to them, "You wish very much to have a king; God is not pleased with your wish; because he was your king, your best friend, and you are ungrateful and rebellious to ask for another. But God will let you have your wish; call now all your tribes before the Lord, and He will choose a king for you."

Then Samuel called the tribes one after another, and the tribe of Benjamin was chosen; then he called all the families of Benjamin, and the family of Kish was chosen; and Saul was chosen out of that family, to be king of Israel. Then the people said, "Where is Saul?" He is our king, bring him here." So they sought him, but could not find him for a long time. Then the people asked God again, to tell them if Saul was the right man, and God said "Yes," and He told them that Saul had hid himself; so they looked in the place which God pointed out, and there they found Saul; and they brought him to the people. He was taller than any of them, and they all admired him very much. Then Samuel said, "Do you see the king whom God has chosen?" All the people shouted for joy, and said, "God save the king."

CIII.

SAMUEL'S WARNING.



AFTER Saul was made king, Samuel again called the people together. He was now a very old man, and soon he must die, and leave them; but they had a young king to rule over them when he was gone, and Samuel wanted to talk to them, and to warn them, and to teach them what they must do to be happy with their new king.

Samuel said, "I am now an old man; my hair is white with age; I have been with you all my life, from the time when I was a child till now. Tell me if I have oppressed you, or if I have taken anything away from you, and I will restore it." Then the people cried "No;" for they all loved Samuel, and knew that he had always been their friend.

Then Samuel said again, "Wait, and hear what I wish to say to you. Many years ago, God brought your fathers out of Egypt, and Moses and Aaron with them, and gave them this land for a possession. Very often your fathers rebelled against God, and then he punished them, and sent enemies to fight and conquer them. He sent Sisera, and the Philistines, and the Moabites, and many more enemies to fight against them. But when your fathers repented, and turned to God, and gave up their idols, then the Lord had mercy, and saved them. He sent many good and faithful captains, to conquer their enemies. Gideon, and Jephthah, and Samson,

and many more. Now you have asked for a king, because you were tired of God ruling over you; and He has given you Saul, and you are pleased and happy. If you and your king obey and serve the Lord, then God's blessing will be upon you, and you will have the Lord for your friend. But if you are disobedient, and rebel, then God will be your enemy, and punish you as He punished your fathers. And now, God is going to do a great thing, that you may know how much you have sinned against Him in asking for a king."

What was this great thing? It was harvest time, when it very seldom rains, or thunders, or lightens in Judea; but Samuel asked God to send a storm, to show His great power to the people, and to teach them how angry He was.

God heard Samuel's prayer, and sent a fearful storm of thunder, and lightning, and rain; and all the people were very much afraid. Then they cried aloud, and asked Samuel to pray to God for them, and confessed their sins, and asked forgiveness for having wished for a new king, when God Himself was their king.

Samuel was sorry to see the people unhappy, and he comforted them, and spoke kindly to them. He said, "Yes, I will pray for you, and I will teach you to do what is right. But remember always to fear the Lord, and to love and obey Him. Think how kind

He has been to you in past times, and how merciful He is to you now. If you cleave to Him with all your heart, He will never, never forsake you; but if you do wickedly, He will destroy both you and your king." Then Samuel ended what he had to say, and the people went home.

CIV.

SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE.



SAUL began his reign well, but very soon he became tired of doing right. His heart had not been made new by the Holy Spirit; so he did not wish to please God, nor care for holy things, nor pray for help to rule his people rightly.

One year passed away. The Philistines were very busy making ready to fight against Israel again; but Saul did not try to prevent them. At last, the Philistines came together in great numbers, and then Saul and the Israelites began to be very much frightened. Saul went to Gilgal, and he told all the people to follow him there, and they came trembling for fear.

Was Samuel with them? No, he did not go to Gilgal directly; but he told Saul to wait there seven days, and then he promised to come and offer the sacrifice, and pray for God's blessing. Saul and the people waited till the seventh day; then they looked for Samuel, but they did not see him coming. At last, Saul became very impatient, and he would not wait any longer. He commanded the people to bring the offering, and he sacrificed it himself, without waiting for Samuel.

Was this right? No; Saul was not a priest, nor a prophet; he had no right to offer sacrifices, and he

disobeyed the command of God and of Samuel in doing this. Samuel had not forgotten his promise; Saul had just finished offering the sacrifice, when he looked up, and saw Samuel coming. Then Saul ran to meet Samuel; for he was not sorry nor ashamed of the wicked thing he had done. But Samuel said to the king, "What hast thou done?" Saul answered, "I saw the Philistines coming, and thou wast not here, and therefore I offered the sacrifice myself." But Samuel said, "Thou hast done foolishly and wickedly. Thou hast disobeyed the command of God. He will soon take away the kingdom from thee, and give it to a better man. God is not thy Friend now, because thou hast disobeyed and rebelled against Him." Then Samuel arose and went away. He could not stay with wicked, disobedient Saul, because he knew that Saul had no love to God, and no wish to please Him. Saul did not care for God's blessing; pride, and impatience, and rebellion made him offer the sacrifice; not faith, and love, and obedience to God.

When Samuel was gone, Saul counted his soldiers, and made them ready for the battle. But God was not with Saul, to help him now.

Saul had a son very unlike him-

himself; a son who loved and feared God. His name was Jonathan. When Jonathan saw the Philistines all waiting in their tents in great numbers, he called the man who carried his armor, and said, "Let us go up to the Philistines, and fight them. They are more and stronger than we; but if we trust in God, He can help us to conquer them: He can save by many or by few."

Jonathan's armor-bearer was willing to go; they both went boldly, and showed themselves to the Philistines. When their enemies saw them, they called to them to come up, for the Philistines did not fear Jonathan and his man; they only laughed at them. The way up to the Philistines' camp was very steep, through sharp rocks. But Jonathan was not afraid. He called to his armor-bearer, and said, "Come up after me; for the Lord hath delivered them into our hands." Then they both began to climb up the rocks on their hands and knees, because the way was so rough and steep. But God helped them, as Jonathan had said: and brought them in safety to the top of the rock.

When Jonathan and his armor-bearer were at the top of the rock, they began to fight with their enemies, and God gave them power to conquer, and they killed twenty men of the Philistines. God made all the Philistines tremble with fear, and the ground shook too; but He gave strength to Israel, and they gained the victory that day. Saul did not see Jonathan and his armor-bearer when they went to the Philistines' camp on the rock; and he wondered very much when he heard the noise. He looked round,

and counted his men, to see who had gone away; and soon he found that Jonathan and his armor-bearer were not there. Then Saul and all his soldiers went to the battle, and fought and conquered the Philistines. It was God who saved the Israelites, not their own power. God made the Philistines fall one upon another, for fear made them like wild, mad men.

The Israelites were very weak and tired that day, for Saul had commanded them not to eat any food till all their enemies were conquered. But Jonathan did not hear his father's command. At last the Israelites came to a wood; the ground there was covered with honey, made by the bees that had their nests among the trees; the people looked at the honey, and wanted to eat it; but they were afraid of disobeying the king. They were very hungry, but they would not taste the honey. But as Jonathan had not heard the command, he took some honey, and ate, and soon he felt better and stronger. Then the people told Jonathan what Saul had said.

When the battle was ended, and the people might eat, they all ran greedily and killed oxen, and sheep, and lambs, and began to eat without waiting till the meat was prepared. Then Saul was angry with them, and said, "Why do you sin against God, and eat the blood of the animals?" But Saul forgot that it was his own foolish and cruel command which made the people do so. Then Saul built an altar to the Lord, in remembrance of the victory. It was right to thank God, and pray to Him; but Saul's heart

was not right. God knew that Saul did not really love Him, but only pretended to honor Him. God would not be pleased with Saul's altars, and sacrifices, and prayers, if wickedness was in Saul's heart. God knows all our thoughts; He knows when we are sincere, and when we are not sincere; and He will not bless hypocrites.

Saul said, "Let us now go again in the night, and kill more of the Philistines. We will not let one escape." But the priest said, "Let us ask God's blessing before we go." Saul then asked God, "Shall I go to fight the Philistines? Wilt thou help me to conquer them?" But God gave no answer. Then Saul called all the people, and said, "Come now, and we will ask God to tell us who has sinned, and why He will not answer our prayers." So they cast lots, and God made the lot fall on Jonathan. Saul did not

know that Jonathan had eaten the honey, for the people had not told him. Then Saul called Jonathan, and said, "Tell me what thou hast done?" Jonathan knew that his father was angry; but he did not try to deny; he was not afraid to confess the truth. He said directly, "I tasted a little honey in the wood; I did not hear thy command; and must I die?" Then Saul said, "Thou shalt surely die, Jonathan." But the people hid Jonathan, and would not let Saul hurt him. Then the Philistines went back to their own country, and Saul fought against his other enemies, the Moabites, and Amalekites, and Ammonites, and conquered them. But after all his victories, Saul could not be happy. God was not with him; and riches, and possessions, and victories cannot make us happy without God's love and blessing.

CV.

THE AMALEKITES.

GOD now sent a new command to Saul. There were some wicked people living near, the Amalekites; and God told Samuel to command Saul to go and destroy them. Men, and women, and children, and oxen, and sheep, all must die. This was a sad command, but it must be obeyed. God had waited many long years, to see if the Amalekites would repent, and turn to Him. But these wicked people loved their sins and their idols, and they would not give them up. And

now God would wait no longer, and He said, that all the Amalekites should be destroyed. God in mercy gives sinners time to repent; but if they will not attend, nor pray for forgiveness, they will be destroyed, and perish for ever.

Saul called his soldiers, and they went to fight against Amalek. God helped Israel to conquer their enemies; all the people of Amalek were killed, and the king was taken prisoner. Did Saul do as God told him? No; for he did not kill Agag the king, and he chose the best of

the sheep and oxen, and put them away, and did not kill them; but all that was bad he destroyed. Was this right? No, it was disobedience to God's command. Saul thought his own way better than God's way; he was self-willed and rebellious. God was much displeased with Saul, and He sent Samuel to him with a very fearful message. In the morning, Samuel rose early, and went to Saul to Gilgal. Saul was not sorry, nor ashamed of what he had done; he boldly dared to say, "I have performed God's command." But Samuel said, "What is this noise of sheep and oxen which I hear?" Then Saul answered, "The people saved them to sacrifice to God: all the rest we have killed." Samuel said, "Hear now what God has told me. He commanded thee to go and kill all the Amalekites; He told thee to destroy everything; why didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord?" Then Saul again said, "I have obeyed God; I have taken Agag prisoner; he is here; and the people took the animals for sacrifice." Samuel answered, "God does not want sacrifices without obedience. God likes humility, and love, and gentleness; obedience pleases Him more than any sacrifice. Rebellion makes him angry, and thou hast rebelled; and therefore God has now

turned away from thee, and will not let thee be king over His people Israel." Then Saul began to be frightened, and he said, "Yes, I have sinned; but now forgive me, and let me worship God." But Samuel knew that Saul was not truly sorry; and he turned to go away. Then Saul took hold of Samuel's garment, that Samuel might not go, and the garment rent. Samuel turned round again, and said, "God has rent the kingdom from thee to-day; and soon He will give it to a better man than thou." Then Saul cried, "I have sinned; but honor me now before the people, and let us worship God together."

Samuel did what Saul wished; he turned again, and Saul worshipped the Lord. But did God attend to Saul's worship? No, God will not accept the prayers of proud rebellious people; He turns away and will not look upon them. Then Samuel commanded king Agag to be brought to him. Agag thought he was safe; but no, God said he must die. He had been a wicked and cruel king, he had murdered many people; and now God punished him. Samuel killed him in Gilgal, in obedience to God's command. Then Samuel returned to Ramah, and Saul went home to his house in Gibeah.

CVI.

JESSE'S SONS.



SAMUEL never came to Saul again; he could not bear to see that wicked king; for Saul was growing more and more rebellious against God. Samuel remembered the day when he first saw Saul at Ramah; when he talked so kindly to him, and anointed him king, and kissed, and blessed him. Then Saul was humble, and gentle, and obedient; and Samuel hoped he loved God, and wished to serve Him. But now Saul was proud, and rebellious, and disobedient. He had forsaken God, and God had forsaken him. Samuel was very unhappy when he thought about this. How sad it is to begin rightly like Saul, and soon to grow weary of well doing, and forget God, and love the world, and Satan, and sin, better than holy things! If we grow tired of God, God will depart from us. If we leave off praying, God will not give us His grace; and then we shall grow worse and worse, and at last die without hope, and without forgiveness.

One day, when Samuel was mourning for Saul, God spoke to him, and said, "Do not mourn any longer for Saul. I will not have him for king, because he has forsaken me. Take a horn of oil, and go to the house of Jesse, in Bethlehem. I have chosen a king among his sons." Then Samuel obeyed God, and went to Bethlehem, and made a sacrifice there, as God told him, and he called Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice. Jesse

had eight sons. Seven of them were at home, but the youngest was in the fields keeping sheep. When Samuel saw Eliab, Jesse's eldest son, he was very much pleased with him; and thought he must be the new king God had chosen. But God did not look at the face, He looked at the heart; He wanted a king who would love and serve him, not a king who was tall and handsome. He said, "I have not chosen this man." Samuel looked at the six other sons also, but God had chosen none of them. Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Where is thy youngest son? Call him, for we must have him here."

Then Jesse sent out to the field, and brought in his youngest son. His name was David. David was young; he too was beautiful; but God did not choose him for his beauty. David loved God, and he wished and prayed to love Him more. When David was alone in the fields keeping his sheep, he liked to think of God. And then, David used to pray, and to play upon his harp, and sing beautiful hymns of praise to God. How pleasant it is when young people begin to love and serve the Lord early, as David did!

When David came into his father's house, God said to Samuel, "Anoint him; this is the king I have chosen." Then Samuel poured oil upon David's head, and anointed him; and all his brothers looked on. David wondered why God should honor him so much, and give him the kingdom; but he was not proud

of the honor. He did not want to be king directly; he waited patiently for the right time. God had given David a better thing than the kingdom. He had given him His Holy Spirit. This made David truly wise. God himself had taught him about Christ, and Heaven, and future things which should happen after David's death.

CVII.

DAVID'S HARP.



WHILE young David was keeping his sheep in the fields of Bethlehem, and singing his beautiful songs of praise to God, Saul was in his house at Gibeah, very unhappy. He had no comfort, none to love him and make him happy. When God went away from Saul, Satan came to him; for if God's Holy Spirit is not in our hearts, Satan must be there. He likes to tempt people and make them sin; and he will try to make them worse and worse, till at last he brings them to hell. We must pray God to give us grace to resist the devil, that he may flee from us, and that the Holy Spirit may come and dwell in our hearts.

Saul did not pray; and now Satan was with him, making him every day more and more rebellious, and passionate, and cruel. He was often like a mad man, so wild and angry. Saul's servants were sorry to see their master unhappy, and they spoke kindly to him, and tried to comfort him, and said to him, "Let us seek a man who can play upon the harp; and let him come and play before thee; and thou shalt be well." Saul answered, "Yes, bring me a man who can play well." Then

one of the servants said, "I know a young man who is very clever in playing upon the harp; he is a brave man, and very wise too; and God is with him. He is a son of Jesse, and his name is David." Then Saul commanded his servant to go, and bring David to him. So the servant went to Jesse, and told him Saul's command; and David made himself ready directly, and went to the king's house. Saul soon loved David, and told him to stay at his court, and made him his armor-bearer; and when the evil spirit came upon Saul, David used to play to him upon the harp. The sweet music comforted Saul, and made him better; and the evil spirit went away. But David's music could not change Saul's heart. It had no power to take away his sin, and to make him at peace with God. Saul was well for a little time, but soon the evil spirit returned.

God alone has power to make us always truly happy. Only the Holy Spirit in our hearts can give us true peace. Saul had not this, because he did not ask for it. He did not pray God to take away the evil spirit, and to give him a new heart. He was pleased with David's

music, but he did not care about the holy things which David loved so much. Saul wanted to forget his misery, but he did not want to return to God.

CVIII.

GOLIATH.



THE Israelites' old enemies, the Philistines, now came to fight against them again. They pitched their tents on a high mountain, and Saul and his army stood upon another mountain opposite, and there was a valley between the two armies. The Philistines had with them a very bold commander, a great giant, named Goliath. He was very tall, and covered with thick armor; and he had a great sword, and shield, and spear: and he stood, and cried to the army of Israel, "Why do you come to fight against me? If you can, choose a man, and let him come and fight me, and try to kill me." The Israelites were much frightened when they heard the proud Philistine speak thus, and Saul was frightened also.

Jesse's three eldest sons followed Saul to the battle, but David went home to keep his father's sheep at Bethlehem. One day, Jesse called David, and said, "Go now to the camp and see thy brothers, and ask if they are well, and take them some corn, and ten loaves of bread; and carry these ten cheeses to their captain." David obeyed; he asked a man to keep his sheep while he was away, and went to the camp. When he came near the army, he heard a great shout; the soldiers

were just going to begin the battle. Then David made haste, and ran to speak to his brethren. While they were talking, the great giant came out of the Philistine's army, and spoke as he had done before; and David heard him. Then all the Israelites, when they saw Goliath, ran away for fear. But David said, "Who is this Philistine who comes to frighten God's people? What power has he to hurt us, if God is on our side?" Then the eldest brother spoke very unkindly to David, and said, "Why camest thou here? What hast thou done with the few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the haughtiness of thy heart; for thou art come down to see the battle." But David answered gently, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?"

Then some of the people went to Saul, and told what David said; and Saul sent for David. When David came to the king, he spoke very boldly, for God made him bold, and he said, "Do not fear this great Philistine; I am ready to go and fight him." But Saul said, "Thou hast not power to conquer him; thou art young, and he is very strong, and has been used to fighting all his life." David answered, "I am a shepherd, and I keep my father's sheep in Bethlehem. One

day, a lion and a bear came to my flock, and took away a lamb, and I ran, and killed the lion and the bear, and saved the lamb, and took it out of the lion's mouth, and brought it back to the fold. It was God who gave me strength to kill those great animals, and I know He will give me power now to conquer this wicked Philistine. God is with us, and He will deliver us from our enemies." Then Saul said, "Go, and the Lord be with thee." Saul gave David all his armor, a helmet, and a spear, and a sword. But David said, "No, I do not want these; I have not been used to them." So he took them all off, and chose five smooth stones, and put them into his shepherd's bag; and he took a sling, and a staff, and went to meet the giant. Then the Philistine came out, but when he saw David, he laughed at him, and said, "Canst thou conquer me? Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field!" But David answered, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and a spear, and a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. I know that thou art very strong, and that I am weak, and unable of myself to fight thee; but God is with me, and He is stronger than thou. He will give me power to conquer and kill thee;

for He can fight without swords and spears, for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands." Then David ran to meet his great enemy. He took a stone, and put it into his sling, and slung it; and the stone went into the forehead of the giant, and he fell down on the ground. Then David ran to the Philistine, and stood upon him, and took the sword of the giant, and slew him, and cut off his head; for David had no sword of his own. Then all the Philistines, when they saw that their commander was dead, fled; and the Israelites followed, and killed very many of them. The Israelites returned shouting for joy, and David took the giant's head, and brought it to Jerusalem..

How could young David, without armor, conquer the great strong Philistine? It was not David's strength, nor his sling, nor his stone, that gained the victory; they had no power; it was David's God who conquered, and He alone. David looked in faith to God for help, and He gave him the victory. We have enemies to fight too; not great soldiers like Goliath, but enemies who fight against our souls. We must fight in God's strength, not in our own. We must ask God to fight for us, and then we shall be enabled to conquer and gain the victory.

CIX.

THE TWO FRIENDS.



WHEN Saul saw David going to fight with the giant, he called Abner, the captain of the army, and asked, "Who is that young man?" Saul had known David before; for, when the evil spirit made him unhappy, David had often played to him on the harp. But Saul had forgotten David now. When the fight was over, Abner called David, and led him to Saul, with the giant's head in his hand. Then Saul asked, "Who art thou, young man?" And David said, "I am the son of Jesse of Bethlehem." Jonathan, Saul's son, was standing by; and when he saw David, and heard him speak, he began to love him. David did not go home again to Bethlehem. Saul took him to live with him at court, and David was captain over the soldiers. It was a great honor to David to live at court with the king; but he was not proud of his honor. He was humble, and respectful, and obedient. He always remembered his duty to Saul, and tried to please him in everything. This was very wise and right in David.

Saul's servants loved David, because he was so kind, and gentle, and humble, and wise; and Saul, too, loved him at first. Jonathan

and David were very dear friends: they loved one another like brothers, and Jonathan was kind and generous to David, and gave him his own robe, and his bow, and his sword, and his girdle. Jonathan served God; and when he saw that David served Him too, Jonathan made him his friend. How pleasant it is when young people begin to love and serve God together! We ought always to choose friends who love God, not friends who love the world. Worldly friendships soon end; they cannot comfort us when we are in sorrow, nor when we die; and we cannot meet worldly friends in Heaven. But holy friendships never end; we may part from our dear friends for a little time, but soon we shall meet them in heaven, and never lose them again.

While David and Jonathan were living so happily together, Saul was very miserable. Why were David and Jonathan happy? Because God was their friend, and His blessing was upon them. And why was Saul miserable? Because God was his enemy, and he had none to comfort him. His riches, and kingdom, and power, and servants, could not make him happy. "There is no peace to the wicked." *Isaiah* lvii. 21.

CX.

SAUL'S HATRED TO DAVID.

SAUL now began to hate David. Why? Because he was jealous of him, for he thought the people loved David more than they loved himself. After the battle and the victory, when Saul and all his people were going home, the women came out to meet them; and they sang, and played, and danced, and shouted for joy. They sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands." This made the king very angry. He thought they gave very little honor to him, and a great deal of honor to David, and that they loved David best, and would make him king. So Saul grew very jealous, and looked unkindly at David; though David had done no wrong. Jealousy is a very great sin. We ought to be glad to see good people honored and loved. It is very wrong to want to have all the praise ourselves, and to feel angry when others are praised. We ought to ask God to take jealousy and selfishness out of our hearts.

The next day, the evil spirit came into Saul again; and David took his harp and began to play, and tried to quiet him. But David's harp did not take away Saul's passion now. Saul had a spear in his hand, and he tried to throw it at David while he played: but David turned away, and the spear passed without hurting him. When Saul saw that God was David's friend, he was afraid; he could not kill David, but he sent him away, because he

did not like to see him. He made David captain over the soldiers; and they all loved him, and the people loved him; and God loved him too, and kept him, wherever he went. David conquered and killed many of the Philistines. Saul hoped he would be slain in battle; but God brought him back safely.

David married Michal, Saul's daughter, and she loved him; but Saul hated him more and more, and tried again to kill him, and commanded Jonathan and all his servants to put David to death. Jonathan was much frightened to hear this command, and he went to David, and said, "My father seeketh to kill thee; go now and hide, and I will talk to my father about thee, and tell thee what he says." So David went and hid himself, and Jonathan went home to Saul, and began to talk to him. Jonathan spoke very gently and respectfully to his father, for he honored him, as his father and his king. He said, "Do not sin against David; do not slay him; for he is very good, and never hurt nor disobeyed thee. Remember how bravely he fought the Philistines, and conquered the great giant. Thou didst rejoice in what he did then, why wilt thou slay him now?" Saul attended to Jonathan, and promised not to slay David; so Jonathan called his friend, and brought him back.

Jonathan did great good, because he was kind and gentle. Solomon says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." *Prov. xv. 1.* Jonathan

turned away his father's wrath by softness and gentleness. When people are angry and passionate, we should try to speak kindly and affectionately to them; we ought to tell them that anger and passion are very sinful, but we must tell them

so gently, not angrily. And we should pray God to turn away their wrath, because He alone has power to quiet sinful passions. Try to be like Jonathan; kind, and affectionate, and humble, as he was.

 OXL

DAVID AT RAMAH.



SOON after, there was a new war with the Philistines, and David went out and conquered them; and then Saul's jealous temper returned. One day, Saul was sitting in his house: the evil spirit was in him, and David was playing to him upon the harp. Saul had a spear in his hand, and again Satan tempted him to throw it at David to kill him. But David saw what Saul was doing, and escaped out of the room; and the spear went into the wall, and did not hurt him. Then Saul sent servants to take David in his own house: but Michal let him down out of a window, and he escaped to Samuel at Ramah.

David had a sad story to tell Samuel about Saul. It made the old prophet very unhappy, because he remembered that in past times Saul had been humble and obedient, and Samuel had loved him then. There was a school of the prophets at Naioth in Ramah; and there Samuel went, and he took David with him. It must have been very pleasant to David to be with these holy people, talking and prophesying of the things of God,

far away from cruel angry Saul. But Saul soon heard where David was, and sent messengers to Ramah to take him prisoner. And did God let the enemies of David hurt him? No—when the messengers came to Ramah, God gave them the spirit of prophecy: and instead of taking David, they stood by him, and Samuel, and the other holy men, prophesied too. Then Saul sent more messengers to Ramah, but they began to prophesy. At last Saul went himself; for he was very angry, and determined that David should not escape. But when Saul came to Ramah, the spirit came upon him, and he prophesied too, with all the others, before Samuel: and Saul's wish and power to hurt David were taken from him.

But was Saul's heart made new now? Was his sinful temper gone, and was he beginning to love and serve God? No: Saul praised God, and said many holy things, perhaps, when he prophesied at Ramah, with his lips, but he did not feel them in his heart. He did not repent, nor ask for pardon, nor pray for a new heart; and therefore the evil spirit soon came again, and Saul was cruel and passionate, as he

was before. Many people, like Saul, know much about God, and the Bible, and the holy things we read there, who never go to Heaven. Knowing and talking about these things cannot save our souls. We must love God in our hearts, and have our sins washed away in the blood of Jesus Christ, and be made

new and clean by the Holy Spirit, and then we shall be taken to Heaven; but knowledge alone will never take us there. God sees our hearts; He knows if we truly love Him, or if, like Saul, we only pretend to love Him. We cannot deceive God: let us ask Him, then, to teach us to serve Him in truth.

CXII.

DAVID'S ESCAPE.

DAVID escaped from Ramah, and went again to Jonathan, and told him all his trouble. David said, "I know thy father Saul is seeking to kill me. He does not tell thee this, because he knows how it would vex thee; but I am quite sure that there is but a step between me and death." Then Jonathan was very sorry, and he said, "Tell me, what can I do to save thee?" David answered, "To-morrow Saul has a great feast, and he thinks I shall be there; let me hide myself instead of going to the feast. My father has a great sacrifice for his family at Bethlehem, and I wish to be there. If Saul inquires for me, tell him, I asked to go to my father's sacrifice at Bethlehem, and see if he is very angry or not." Jonathan said, "Let us go out now into the field, and we will think what we must do."

So they both went out, and walked in the field, and then Jonathan said, "To-morrow I will talk to my father, and if I see that he is kind and friendly, I will send and tell thee; or if he is angry, then too I will tell

thee, and send thee away safely. But if we part, and never see one another again, do not forget me; love me, and think about me while I live; and after I am dead, remember me, and be kind to my children and family, and do not forget my love to thee." Then David promised never to forget Jonathan; and to love his children, and be kind to them after Jonathan's death. But David and Jonathan could not stay long to talk; David must hide himself very quickly; and so Jonathan said, "Go now; and, after three days, come again to the place where thou didst hide before. Then I will come, and bring a lad with me; and I will shoot arrows, and tell the lad to go and bring them to me. If I tell the lad that the arrow is near to him, know that all is safe; but if I tell him that the arrows are far off beyond him, then know that there is danger, and make haste, and escape." David understood this; and then he went away, and Jonathan came home.

Next day was Saul's feast. David was not there; Saul looked for him, but he could not see him; and

he wondered where he was, but said nothing. Next day again, David was not at the feast, and Saul asked, "Where is David? He was not at the feast yesterday, and I do not see him here to-day; why does he not come?" Jonathan said, "He asked me to let him go home to a sacrifice at Bethlehem, because his father wanted him to be there." Then Saul was angry, and he said, "David shall die: send, and bring him here, for he shall surely die?" But Jonathan answered, "Why must David die? He has done no wrong." Then Saul grew still more angry, and he threw a spear at Jonathan, to kill him, because he loved David. But Jonathan arose quickly, and went away from the table. He could not stay at the feast, because he was afraid of his father, and unhappy about his dear friend.

The third day, Jonathan went again into the field to meet David, and he took a little boy with him. Jonathan had his bow and arrows; and he shot an arrow a long way off, and said to the boy, "Run, and bring me the arrow, there it is be-

yond thee." Why did Jonathan shoot the arrow beyond the boy? Because Jonathan wanted David to understand that there was danger, and that he must escape directly. David was hidden in the field, and heard what Jonathan said. The boy brought the arrow to his master, and then Jonathan sent him home. The boy knew nothing about David. When he was gone, David arose and came to Jonathan. He knew that he must go now, and part from his dear friend; and that perhaps they would never meet again. David and Jonathan embraced and kissed one another, and wept. And then Jonathan said, "Go in peace; God will be with us; He will be our friend. Do not forget me, nor my children after me; and I will never forget thee." So David went away, and Jonathan returned home.

This was a sad parting. It is always sad to lose our dear friends. But if friends love God, then they know that He is with them, and that He will take care of them, and bring them all safely to their home in Heaven. There dear friends will meet in joy, and never part again.

CXIII

DAVID AT NOB.



HERE did David go when he had parted from Jonathan? First, he went to Nob, in Benjamin, where the tabernacle was; and there he saw Ahimelech the priest. David knew that he could not now go often to worship God in the holy place; he must hide from Saul, and escape to save his life. And it made David unhappy to think of this, because he loved the worship of God. Ahimelech wondered very much to see David, and he asked why he came. Did David tell him? No: David was afraid to speak the truth; he was tempted to tell a lie. He said, "King Saul sent me here upon secret business. He commanded me not to say what the business is. Give me, I pray thee, some of the bread I see there." The bread which Ahimelech had was the shew-bread. It was hallowed bread; the priests alone might eat it; but Ahimelech gave some to David, and the men with him, because they were hungry, and could get no common bread. Then David asked the priest to give him some armor. Ahimelech had there the sword of Goliath, and he showed it to David. David was

pleased to see it again, for it made him remember how God had helped him to conquer and kill the great giant, a little time before. Then Ahimelech gave David the sword, and let him go.

Where did David go? He went to Gath, to king Achish. Achish was a kind king; but he was a Philistine, and his people did not like David to be there, because they remembered what he had done, in past times, to the Philistines. And David was unhappy at Gath; for he was afraid of Achish and his people; he thought that perhaps they might kill him, or tell Saul about him. Did David trust God in his danger? Yes: but David was a poor weak sinner, and very often fear made him forget God, and do what was wrong. Fear had made him tell a lie to Ahimelech, at Nob; and now fear made him deceitful again to Achish, at Gath. He pretended to be mad, and ran about wildly, and scratched upon the doors, and did many more foolish things. Then Achish sent him away, and David went and hid in a cave; and there all his family and friends came to him to comfort him.

CXIV.

THE PRIESTS KILLED.



WHEN David was in the tabernacle at Nob, talking to the priests, a man was there named Doeg.

He was keeper of Saul's cattle; a very wicked man, and an enemy of David. Saul heard that David was escaping from place to place, and he tried to find him, that he might kill him, and he asked his servants to tell him all they knew about David, and who were his friends who helped him to escape. Then Doeg said, "I saw David come to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest, and Ahimelech gave him food, and the sword of the giant Goliath." Then Saul sent for Ahimelech, and all the priests that were at Nob.

When the priests came to Saul, he spoke very angrily to them, and said to Ahimelech, "Why hast thou given bread and a sword to David my enemy, and helped him to fight against me, and kill me? Ahimelech answered, "David is not an enemy; he is faithful, and obedient to the king; and I knew nothing of all this." But Saul would not attend to Ahimelech, and he commanded the servants, who stood by, to put Ahimelech, and all the other priests, to death. The servants feared God more than their cruel

master did; and they would not kill these holy priests. Then Saul turned to Doeg, and told him to kill the priests. Doeg was glad to obey; and he drew his sword, and slew them all, eighty-five in number, and then went to Nob, and killed the people there; men, and women, and children. Only one son of Ahimelech, named Abiathar, escaped, and ran to David, and told him the sad story. David spoke very kindly to Abiathar, and made him come and live with him; and they comforted one another.

How very wicked Saul had become! He began with impatience and disobedience; now, Satan made him a murderer of God's people. Wicked tempers grow worse and worse every day, if they are not subdued by God's grace. God had gone away from Saul, because Saul would not pray; and now, Satan and his own wicked heart taught him to do these dreadful things.

Abiathar was the only priest left of Eli's family. Many years before, God had said that he would destroy them, because Eli had not punished his wicked sons. God never forgets what he says. He forgave Eli; but He punished his sin.

CXV.

DAVID'S WANDERINGS.

DAVID was not alone in his wanderings. Many men came to him to help him; they followed wherever he went; he was their captain, and they obeyed him. Some of David's soldiers were very brave men. The Philistines were now fighting again against Israel; and David and his men used to go, and try to conquer them. One day, David was very tired and thirsty with long fighting. The Philistines' camp was then at Bethlehem; and there was a well of water at Bethlehem; but David and his men were afraid to drink it, because their enemies were near. When David was so thirsty, he cried, "Oh! that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!" David's soldiers heard what he said; and they bravely ran in through their enemies, to the well, and drew the water, and brought it to David. They loved their master so much, that they did not think about their own danger. Was David glad to drink the water? No; he saw his friends in danger, and he did not like them to suffer for him; and when they brought the water to him, he said, "No, I will not drink it; my brave soldiers have suffered more than I, and they are thirsty too; this water is too good for me; I will give it to God." So he poured it out an offering to the Lord.

The Philistines now came to fight against a place named Keilah; and David asked God if he should go and try to save it. He was right to ask, for we ought always to ask

God's blessing before we do any thing. God told David to go, and promised to help him; so David went, and fought against the Philistines, and saved the people of Keilah. When Saul heard that David was there, he thought he could kill him, and that he could not escape. But David again asked help from God, and was delivered. Wicked people cannot hurt the servants of God without His permission, and God did not permit Saul to hurt David. David now wandered about in the woods and deserts, for fear of Saul. It was a sad life; but he trusted in God, and was peaceful and happy. He wrote many beautiful psalms when he was wandering and hiding in those wild places.

Where was Jonathan? Did he ever see his friend David again? Yes, Jonathan had not forgotten him; and when he heard where David was, he went to see him secretly in the wood. David and Jonathan were very glad to meet again for a little time. They had much to say to one another. Jonathan comforted David in the right way; he told him to trust in God. He said, "Do not fear; my father cannot hurt thee, because God has promised to keep thee, and to make thee king; and He never forgets His promises." Then David and Jonathan prayed together, and kissed one another for the last time: they never met again on earth. But now their happy souls are in heaven together; all their sorrows are ended; they will never weep again.

CXVI

SAUL IN THE CAVE.



WHEN Saul had finished fighting with the Philistines, he went into the wilderness, and many soldiers with him; and they all wandered about among the rocks, trying to find David. But God still kept David in safety from his enemies. At last Saul came to a cave, and went into it to rest; for he was tired. The cave was very large, it could hold many people, and Saul and his men were not alone in it. Who were there besides? David and his soldiers were in the cave; but Saul did not see them, because they were in another part of it; so he went in, and lay down, and was soon asleep. David's men saw Saul come into the cave, and said to their master, "See, there is Saul; God has given him into thy hand." Then David arose and went to Saul. There he lay asleep; he had no power to hurt David, and David could kill him if he liked. And did he kill Saul? No; David had no angry feelings in his heart; he did not wish to hurt his enemy; but he went quietly and cut off a piece of Saul's robe. When David came again to his men, he felt sorry. Why? Because he had not killed Saul? No; David was sorry because he had cut off part of Saul's robe. Then David commanded his servants not to kill Saul, nor hurt him.

When Saul awoke, he arose to go away. He did not know what

David had done; but David cried out, and said to him, "My Lord, the king!" Saul turned round; and David bowed respectfully before him, and said, "God to-day gave thee into my power, when thou wast asleep in the cave: but I remembered that thou art a king chosen by God, and therefore I did not hurt thee. I never did thee any wrong; why dost thou try to kill me? God knows that I am not thine enemy?" Then Saul began to weep, and said, "Is it thy voice, my son David?" Why did Saul weep? Because he felt how unkind he had been to David, and how kind David was to him. David's gentleness made Saul gentle too.

Saul said, "Thou hast been more righteous than I. Thou hast rewarded me good, though I rewarded thee evil." Then Saul asked David to spare his family after his death: for Saul knew that God would give David the kingdom. David promised this, and Saul went home; and David's kindness made Saul kind for a little time.

If we have enemies, we ought to act towards them as David did towards his enemy. The Bible says, "Love your enemies." When people are unkind to us, we must try to be kind and forgiving to them. When our enemies are in sorrow, we must comfort them, and help them, and try to make them happy. If they are wicked, we ought to talk gently to them, and beg of them to

repent of their sin, and turn to God. And we ought to pray God to forgive them, and to give them new hearts, and make them kind, and gentle, and holy. If we do not forgive, God will not forgive us.

CXVII.

NABAL AND ABIGAIL.

WHEN David was wandering about in the wilderness of Engedi and Paran, he and his men often wanted food; but they never tried to get it in a wrong way, nor to steal from those near them.

There was a man who lived at Maon, named Nabal. He was very rich, and had great possessions in Carmel: sheep, and goats, and asses, and camels. He lived near the place where David now was, and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel: David knew that Nabal was very rich, and he sent messengers to him, to ask for food. David's servants spoke very respectfully to Nabal; they did not rudely ask for what they wanted; for David taught them to honor and respect all men. But Nabal was a selfish and cruel man. He did not care for other people; he tried only to please himself. All his money, and all his possessions, he kept for his own use; he never thought about the poor and hungry, who had no food and no home. Why does God give some people riches? Does He wish them to keep all themselves, and give none away? No, when God gives riches to people, He likes them to be kind and generous; He wishes them to do good with what they have. At the day of judgment, God

will punish those rich people who have not rightly spent what he gave them.

Nabal was angry with David's servants; instead of giving them any thing, he drove them away in a passion, and sent them back again to David. When David heard of Nabal's unkindness and passion, he was angry too. Was David right to be angry? No; he ought to have been patient and forgiving, as he was when Saul was unkind to him.

So David told his men to take their swords, and he made all ready to go to Nabal, to kill him, because he had been unkind and selfish, and cruel. But Nabal had a wife named Abigail. She was not like her husband; she was gentle, and kind, and willing to give away what she could. When Abigail heard about Nabal's cruelty, she was very sorry. She knew that David was a good man, and that he was in great trouble, and trying to hide from Saul; and Abigail wished to be kind to him and his men. So she called her servants, and told them to make ready some sheep, and corn, and figs, and grapes, and to put them upon asses, and take them to David; and she followed, but she did not tell Nabal where she was going.

When Abigail met with David, she came down from the ass, and fell on her face before him. Then,

she spoke very gently to David, and asked him not to be angry, but to forgive her wicked husband. Abigail loved God; and she told David how wrong it is to be passionate and angry; but she spoke very respectfully when she said this, and reminded David that God could preserve him, and punish his enemies; and that, therefore, he must be patient, and leave all to God. When David heard Abigail talk so gently, he became gentle too. He felt he had done wrong, and he thanked God for sending Abigail to keep him from shedding blood. So Abigail gave the present to David, and he thanked her, and she went home. And David and his men had food to eat now, without fighting and shedding blood. It was not right for David to punish Nabal, but God punished him. God must punish our enemies, not we.

When Abigail came home, she

found Nabal making a great feast with his friends. They were eating and drinking, and very merry. It was wicked merriment. They loved their own pleasure and ease; but they did not think of their poor hungry neighbors; they did not care for God, nor holy things: all their thoughts were about this world; eating and drinking, and pleasing themselves. Abigail did not stay with this wicked company; she did not speak to Nabal then, but next morning, she told him about David, and all that she had done. Nabal felt frightened and unhappy at what his wife said. He knew he had done wrong; but Abigail's reproof did not make him repent, and turn to God. He had no comfort now. His riches and his worldly company could do him no good; and God was not his friend. He lived only ten days after.

CXVIII.

DAVID'S KINDNESS TO SAUL.

SAMUEL was now dead. He died and was buried at Ramah; and all Israel wept and mourned for him. But Samuel's happy soul went to Heaven, where is no crying nor sorrow. Samuel began very young to love and serve God, and he loved and served Him all his life long. He was not like Saul, who began well, but soon grew tired of doing right. Saul was only pretending to love God; he did not truly love Him; his heart had never been made new by the Holy

Spirit. But Samuel was a true servant of God. When he was a little boy, he prayed God to teach him to love and serve Him, and God heard his prayer. And when Samuel grew older, he still prayed that God would keep him in the right way. And God never forsook his faithful servant. He took care of Samuel all his life. He comforted him in sorrow, He loved him when he grew old; and when he died, He took his happy soul to be with Him in glory for ever. Was Samuel sorry that he began so soon to serve God?

No; he was happy all his life, because God was his friend. We cannot begin too soon to serve God; we should give Him our whole life; we should love Him when we are young, and love Him more and more every day, till we die, and go to Heaven, to love and serve Him for ever.

David was now in the wilderness of Ziph, and Saul again went to seek him there. Had Saul forgotten his promise to be kind to David? Yes; Saul's sorrow for his cruelty was soon gone. It was not the right sorrow. Right sorrow makes people turn to God, and ask for forgiveness for the past, and grace for the future. Saul did not do this. He went home, but he did not pray; he did not care for God's pardon; and soon Satan came to him again, and his wicked temper returned, and he forgot his promise, and his sorrow, and went again to try to kill David.

David saw Saul come into the wilderness, but Saul did not see him; so he put a pillow upon the ground, and lay down, and fell asleep, and all his men slept too. Then David arose and went to Saul. Why did David go? Did he want to kill him? No; David did not wish to kill his enemy; but he went and looked at him while he slept.

Saul was lying upon the ground on the pillow; his spear was by him, and the soldiers were sleeping around him. It was night, all was quiet; none saw David and his

men. Then one of David's servants said, "Let us kill Saul now; all his soldiers are asleep, and he is in our power; he cannot defend himself." But David said, "No, we must not kill him, though he is our enemy. God will punish him when He pleases, but we have no right to punish him. He is our king, and we are his servants, and therefore, we must respect and honor Saul."

David took away Saul's spear, and a bottle of water which was near the pillow, and went to the top of a hill afar off; and then he cried to Saul's captain, whose name was Abner, and said, "What are you doing? Why do you not keep your king? See where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster." Saul knew David's voice, and he said, "Is this thy voice, my son David?" Then David said, "Yes, it is my voice. Why dost thou come, seeking to kill me? What evil have I done?" Saul again felt sorry, and said, "I have sinned, but I will no more do thee wrong." Then David willingly forgave Saul; and spoke gently to him; and one of Saul's servants came, and took back the spear and the bottle of water; and then Saul blessed David, and they parted.

Saul and David never met again. It was pleasant to David to part in peace, and not in anger. But Saul was not truly penitent. He was at peace with David, but he was not at peace with God.

CXIX.

DAVID AT ZIKLAG.



DAVID now began to be tired of wandering about in fear of Saul. He thought that perhaps Saul would forget his promise, and come again and try to kill him; so he determined to go to the Philistines' country; and ask Achish, king of Gath, to take care of him. Then David called his family, and his soldiers; and they all went to Gath. Achish was very kind to David, and gave him a city named Ziklag, and there David lived in safety. Saul knew where he was, but he did not again try to kill him.

David was not idle when he lived at Ziklag. He went out, and fought against the Amalekites, and conquered, and killed them. This was right, for God had commanded them to be destroyed. But when David came back to Ziklag, he did something that was very wrong. He tried to deceive Achish. Achish asked him where he had been fighting. David was afraid to say that he had destroyed the Amalekites; he thought it might displease Achish; so he said he had been fighting south of Judah. Then Achish was glad, for he thought David had forsaken his own people Israel, and was fighting against them, and that he would come and help Achish to conquer the Israelites.

Soon after this, Achish made his army ready, and called David and his men, and told him to go with

him to fight against Israel. What could David do now? He could not go and fight against his own people; and he was afraid to tell Achish the truth, and to confess how deceitful he had been. So he prepared to go with the army of Achish; but he felt very sad as he stood with the soldiers of the Philistines, ready to fight against his own country. But God helped David in this time of difficulty. When the lords of the Philistines saw David and his soldiers, they asked why those Israelites were in the army. Achish told them, that David, their commander, was his friend, and had lived with him a long time, and would help him to fight against the Israelites. But the lords of the Philistines would not consent to this: they would not have David in their army, for they thought he would not be a true friend to them, and so they would not trust him. Achish was sorry; but he called David and his men, and told them what the lords of the Philistines had said. David pretended to be sorry, and said, "Why may I not go to fight the king's enemies? Have I not been thy faithful servant a long time?" Achish answered, "I know that thou art good in my sight; but the Philistines have said, David shall not go with us to the battle." So David and his men returned to Ziklag, and the Philistines went on to Jezreel, to fight against Israel.

CXX.

ZIKLAG BURNT.

GOD was very kind to David in keeping him from fighting against Israel; but He punished him for his conduct at Ziklag, because He wanted David to be more humble, and more sorry for his sin.

When David and his men came back to Ziklag, they saw the city in ruins. The walls were thrown down, the houses were burnt, and their wives and families were gone. How was this? The Amalekites had come, while David was away, and conquered Ziklag, and taken all the people prisoners. David and his men had no home now; and when they looked round, and saw their city in ruins, and thought about their wives and children, they all began to weep. They wept till they had no more power to weep. They were all unhappy; but David was more unhappy than his men. Why? Because he remembered his own sin, and because his soldiers were angry, and spoke unkindly to him. David was in great sorrow,—where did he go for comfort? Had he any kind friend to help him in his sorrow? Yes; he had one friend, who was ready to comfort him; and this was God. David had forgotten his best friend a long time; he had trusted in Achish, and the Philistines, more than in God, and had made friends of them. But

Achish and the Philistines could not help David now; he was alone, without an earthly friend to comfort him; and then he remembered his friend in Heaven, and felt very sorry he had so displeased and forgotten Him. David prayed, and asked forgiveness for his sinful deceit; and God heard his prayer, and forgave his sin. God had not forgotten David, He was waiting for him to repent, and He was ready to pardon.

David felt happy when God had forgiven him. But how could he get back his family and his possessions? He asked God; and He told him to follow after his enemies, and promised to help him. And did David conquer the cruel Amalekites? Yes, he soon overtook them. He found them all eating, and drinking, and dancing for joy, because they had taken away so much riches from Ziklag. But David and his men soon smote all the Amalekites; and took away their own wives and children, and brought them home in safety.

How kind God was to David after all David's forgetfulness of God! David felt very thankful, and very humble, when he remembered his sins; and he learned in future to trust not in himself but in God alone.

CXXI.

THE WITCH OF ENDOR.



HERE was Saul this long time? He was still at his house, unhappy and discontented; the evil spirit troubling him more and more. The Philistines now came to fight against Israel, and Saul gathered together all his soldiers at Gilboa. But he felt much frightened when he looked upon the army of his enemies, for he knew that He had not God to fight for him.

Saul went and asked God to help him; but had no answer. Saul had forsaken God; now God forsook him. Saul had no answer, because he did not pray humbly; he was not truly sorry for his sin. He was frightened and miserable, but he was not penitent and humble. God promises always to answer sincere prayers; but Saul's prayer was careless and insincere; and, therefore, God would not attend to it.

What could Saul do now? Where did he go for help? Did he pray again to God, and ask for a new heart, and a right spirit? No, Saul was soon tired of prayer, for he did not care for God's blessing and forgiveness. He called his servants, and asked them if they knew a witch who could tell him what he wanted to know. The witches were wicked women who pretended to have the power of raising dead people, and of foretelling future things. God had commanded them to be put to death. But Saul was now grown so foolish, and so

wicked, that he wished to ask advice of a witch, and not of God, nor of His holy prophets.

Saul's servants told him there was a witch living at Endor; so he changed his dress, that people might not know him, and went secretly, by night, to Endor. Saul came to the house where this wicked woman lived, and asked her to raise a dead man to life for him. The woman did not know Saul; and she refused at first to do what he wished, for she was afraid of being put to death. But Saul told her not to fear; and promised she should not be punished. Then she said, "Whom shall I bring up?" And Saul told her to bring up Samuel. The foolish woman had no power to raise Samuel. But God showed His power by causing a figure like Samuel to come up, and speak to Saul. When the woman saw the figure coming up out of the ground, she was very much frightened, and cried out for fear. Then Saul looked too. What did he see? He saw the figure of an old man; he thought it was Samuel, and he bowed down to the ground. Then the figure asked, "Why hast thou called me up?" Saul said, "I am sore distressed; the Philistines make war against me; God is gone from me; and answers me no more, and I have called thee to tell me what I shall do." Then the figure said, "Why dost thou ask of me, if the Lord is thine enemy. He has departed from thee, and given the kingdom to David, because thou

obeyedst not His voice. The Philistines will fight against Israel; and Israel will be conquered; and to-morrow thou and thy sons shall be with me."

What did Saul do? He fell down on the ground in fear and horror. He was very miserable; he had now no hope; to-morrow he must die; his body must fall in the battle-field; and where must his soul go? Could it go to Heaven? No; he was not ready for Heaven. Satan was in his heart, not God's Holy Spirit.

The woman understood now who Saul was; and she and his servants

tried to comfort him. She spoke kindly to him; and made ready some meat, and bread for him to eat. But could all this do Saul any good now? No; he was going to die, and God alone can comfort people in death. But Saul could not go to God for comfort. It was too late; he had forsaken God, and God had cast him off for ever.

Saul arose from the ground, and ate what the woman made ready, and then he and his servants went away. It was night; Saul's last night; to-morrow he must be in another world.

OXXII.

THE DEATH OF SAUL.



SAUL could not sleep that sad night; and the next morning he went to the battle where he was to die. The battle was in Mount Gilboa. The Philistines conquered, and many of the Israelites fell down dead on the field; for God was not fighting for His people now.

The Philistines followed after Saul, and shot him with their arrows, and sorely wounded him. Then he knew that his enemies would soon come and kill him; and he was very much afraid, and called his armor-bearer, and asked him to kill him, that he might not be put to death by the cruel Philistines. But the armor-bearer was afraid to kill Saul; he would not murder his king; so Saul took a sword, and fell upon it, and died. He murdered

himself. He died in his sin; and there was, therefore, no hope that his soul could be saved; self-murderers have no time to ask for pardon.

When the armor-bearer looked at Saul, and saw that he was dead, he took a sword, and fell upon it, and died too. And the Israelites saw that Saul and his sons were dead; and they all ran from their cities, and left their houses; and the Philistines came and lived in them.

Where was Jonathan? The next day, when the Philistines came to look at the field of battle, they found Jonathan, and his brothers, and Saul, all lying dead upon the ground. Jonathan was ready to die. He had begun to love God when young, and well, and happy; and God did not forget Jonathan when he was in trouble, and danger, and death. Jonathan's sins had been all washed

away, and his heart had been made new and clean ; and now he was in Heaven, to be happy for ever, where there is no pain, nor sorrow, nor sin.

The cruel Philistines cut off Saul's head, and took away his armor, and sent home the news of their victory, and shouted for joy. They nailed Saul's body to a wall ; but the people who lived in Jabesh-gilead were kind to their king, and honored him ; and took his body, and his sons' bodies, and buried them all under a tree, and mourned for them many days.

Where was David now ? He was still in Ziklag ; waiting quietly there, and very thankful for God's kindness to him. After the battle, a messenger came to David from Saul's camp. His clothes were rent, and dust was upon his head ; and David knew that he had sad news to tell. Then David asked, who had gained the battle, and what had happened to Saul and Jonathan. The messenger said, " The people are fled from the battle, and many are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan are dead also." Then David asked how all this happened, and the messenger told him that he had seen Saul on Mount Gilboa in

great distress, pursued by the Philistines, and that Saul had asked him to slay him. " So," the man said, " I stood on him, and slew him, and took his crown, and his bracelet ; and I have brought them here to thee." Was this a true story ? No, some of it was false. This man did not kill Saul ; Saul killed himself. Why did the man tell this lie ? Because he thought David would be glad to hear that his enemy Saul was dead ; and perhaps would give him a reward. And was David pleased ? No ; he wept for Saul, and for his dear friend Jonathan ; and he was angry with the man who told him of their death. David thought the story was all true ; so he commanded his servants to slay the man as a murderer. The man was an Amalekite ; one of that wicked nation which God had commanded to be destroyed. God punished him for his wicked lie, when David thought he was punishing him for murdering the king.

David mourned very much for Jonathan, and wrote a beautiful song of lamentation for him, for he could not forget Jonathan's love and kindness.

CXXIII.

KING DAVID.



DAVID was to be king after Saul's death. God had said this many years before; and David had been long waiting quietly till the time came, for he was not impatient to be king. But now that Saul and Jonathan were both dead, David asked God if he should go up to Judah. God told David to go to Hebron in Judah; and he obeyed and went, and all his family and his soldiers with him. Then the men of Judah came, and anointed David king.

Was David glad that Saul was dead, and that he could now reign in peace? No, he still remembered, and mourned for Saul; and honored him very much. The first thing David did, was to call the good people of Jabesh-gilead, and to thank and bless them, because they had been kind to Saul, and buried him. David said to the men of Jabesh-gilead, "I will requite you this kindness, because you have done this thing." David was not revengeful to his enemies. God had punished Saul, but David did not wish to feel angry and unkind towards his poor fallen enemy; he pitied and honored Saul still.

Was David now king of all Israel? No; seven years he reigned only over Judah; Saul had left a son, named Ish-bosheth; and Abner, the captain, took Ish-bosheth, and made him king over Israel. There was a long war between the party of Ish-bosheth, and the party of David. Abner was captain of Ish-bosheth's

soldiers, and Joab was captain of David's soldiers.

David wanted peace in his kingdom; but he knew that all his enemies must first be conquered, because God had told him this, and promised to fight for him, and give him the victory. David grew stronger and stronger every day: and Ish-bosheth grew weaker and weaker. Abner knew that David was God's chosen king; and he sent to him, and promised to help him to reign over the whole kingdom, Israel as well as Judah. So David and Abner made peace, and feasted together at Hebron. But Joab, David's captain, hated Abner, and did not like David to make peace with him. Why? Because Abner had killed Asahel, Joab's brother, in a quarrel, some time before; and Joab had not forgiven Abner. So when Abner went away, Joab followed, and called him, and pretended to speak kindly to him; but Joab had a sword, and he drew it out, and thrust it into Abner's side. Abner fell down dead directly; and the people came and told David. David was angry with Joab, and sorry for Abner. All the people mourned; and when Abner was buried, David himself followed the dead body to the grave. Did David punish Joab for the murder? No, he was afraid; he thought he had not enough power to do so; but he never forgot Joab's wickedness; he said, God would punish him, though he could not.

God always punishes the wicked

at last: He spares them, perhaps a | pent, they must in the end, perish
long time; but, if they do not re- | for ever!

CXXIV.

DAVID'S HAPPINESS.

SOON after Abner's death, there was another sad murder in Israel. Ish-bosheth was killed in his bed, by two men who came into his house pretending to get corn. The wicked murderers cut off the head of Ish-bosheth, and brought it to David, and said, "See, here is the head of the son of thine enemy Saul." The men thought this would please David; but he commanded that the murderers should be slain; so David's servants killed the two wicked men, and hung them up in Hebron; but the head of Ish-bosheth, they buried honorably in Abner's tomb. David was right to punish the men who killed Ish-bosheth, because God has commanded that murderers shall be put to death.

Who reigned over Israel after Ish-bosheth was dead? David. The tribes of Israel all came to him, and asked him to be their king. David now ruled over a large country, and had great possessions. Some years before, he was a poor shepherd boy; now he was a great king.

God loved David, and he gave him honor; but God does not always honor those He loves in this world. Sometimes His people are poor, and have no possessions; perhaps they have not even food and clothing. He sees it best not to give riches and honors to all His

people here: and He knows that riches and honors cannot make them happy. But God has riches to give all His people in heaven. He will give them there crowns of glory, and an everlasting inheritance in His happy kingdom.

What was the first thing King David did? His enemies, the Jebusites, had possession of Jerusalem, and he went there and smote them, and took the city. David then began to feel safe, and his power grew greater and greater every day; for God blessed David in all things, and gave him victory, and strength, and riches. It is God who gives us all the good things we have. Let us thank Him for His kindness, and ask Him to give us His blessing too, because that alone can make us truly happy.

The Philistines now came again to fight against David. He remembered that God had promised to protect him; so before he began to fight against the Philistines, he asked God, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Wilt thou deliver them into my hand?" And God said, Go up, I will deliver them into thy hand." Then David went, and did as God commanded Him; and soon he gained the victory over his enemies.

This may teach you something. When you are in trouble, go and pray to God, and ask Him to tell

you what to do. God is as willing to help you, as He was willing to help David. He will help you to conquer worse enemies than the Philistines; He will help you to conquer your own sinful tempers, and to resist Satan when he tempts you to sin.

CXXV.

THE ARK BROUGHT BACK.



WHEN David was safe and happy, did he forget God, and begin to love worldly things better than holy things? No; when all his enemies were conquered, and his kingdom safe, the first thing he remembered was God's holy ark. The ark was still at Kirjath-Jearim, in the house of Abinadab, who had kept it many years; but David wanted to have it now in his own city of Jerusalem; so he went with many of his people, to Kirjath-Jearim to bring it back. They came to Abinadab's house, and took out the ark, and put it in a new cart; and Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's sons, drove the cart. Then David and all the people were very glad; and they went with the ark, playing and singing for joy. After a little time, they came to a rough place, and the oxen that drew the cart stumbled, and shook the ark. When Uzzah saw the ark shaken, he was afraid it might fall, and he put out his hand, and took hold of it. But Uzzah forgot how very holy the ark was; he did not honor it as he ought, and God punished him, and struck him dead directly. Many years before, God had punished the men of Bethshemesh, because they looked into the ark; and so now God punished Uzzah. He did not

need Uzzah so irreverently to take hold of the holy ark; He Himself could keep it safely.

Uzzah's death was a sad end to David's happiness. All the people were frightened, and David said, he would not have the ark with him now. Was he right not to want now to have the ark? No; he was wrong to be so much afraid; God did not wish to frighten and trouble His people; He only wished to teach them to honor and reverence His holy things. But there was a good man named Obed-edom, who was not afraid to have the ark; so it was carried to his house. Obed-edom was very happy when he had the ark, because God's blessing came with it. All was right at Obed-edom's house when the ark was there.

When David heard that God had blessed Obed-edom, he was no longer afraid of the ark; so he went to the house where it was, and took it away; but the priests carried it upon their shoulders. David had learned to be more reverent, and to teach his people to be reverent too.

When the ark had gone a very little way, David offered sacrifices to God. He asked for God's blessing first, and then he went on safely, knowing that God was with him. David and all the people brought

the ark home; and the king was so happy that he danced for joy. The ark was put in a tabernacle which David made for it; and then he offered sacrifices again, and blessed the people, and gave them bread, and wine, and meat, and sent them away. It was a happy, holy day at Jerusalem. Why were they all so joyful? Because they had the ark with them again. The feasting, and singing, and shouting, were all holy; the people did everything that day in the fear and honor of God; and then they had His blessing, and that made them happy.

CXXVI.

GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID.



WHEN David had sent the people away, he went home to his house. What had he to do there? The day was over, and perhaps he felt very tired; but he would not rest until he had prayed with his family. We ought never to be too tired to worship God. When a happy day is passed, we should thank God, who made it so happy, and ask his blessing before we sleep. And masters and mistresses ought to do as David did. In the evening, they should call their servants and children, and all their family, to worship God. Those are happy families who love to pray and praise God together.

Was David's a happy family? Did they all love God? Were they all glad to have the ark among them again? No; Michal, David's wife, was not glad. She did not care for the ark; and she laughed at David, because he honored it so much, and danced in holy joy before it. But David told her that it was God's love and kindness which made him happy; and that he was thinking of His goodness in making him

king over His people Israel; and that he must thank the Lord, and praise him for all his mercies. David was right, and God was very angry with Michal. It made David unhappy to see Michal laughing at holy things. He tried to teach his family right, but he could not make them love God; he could not give them new hearts. Many of them did not care about God. They knew what was right, but they did not wish to be like David, and to serve God as he did.

A good prophet lived in Israel, named Nathan. David loved and honored Nathan very much, and they often talked together about holy things. One day, when David was sitting quietly in his beautiful house, he said to Nathan, "See what a beautiful house of cedar I have to live in; but God's ark has no house; it is only in a tabernacle; within curtains." David wished to build a temple for God, and to put the ark there. Nathan was glad that David loved and honored God so much, and he said, "Do all that is in thy heart, for the Lord is with thee." But that night, God spoke to Na-

than in a vision, and gave him this message for king David, "God took thee away from thy sheep at Bethlehem, and chose thee to be king over His people Israel. He will bless thee, and thy children after thee; and when thou art dead, then thy son shall reign; and God will be with him, and give him riches, and possessions, and rest and peace from all his enemies. He shall build a temple for God; but God does not wish thee to build it. He is pleased with thee, because of thy wish to honor Him, and He will not forget nor forsake thee all thy life

long. He promises to give thee the kingdom for ever."

When Nathan told this vision to David, David felt happy, and very thankful to God. Why was he happy? Because he knew that God was his friend, and would never forsake him. He had much to make him happy, but it was God's love alone that gave him true joy. And God promises now, never to forsake His people. He does not promise to give them kingdoms; but He does say to all who love and serve Him, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." *Heb. xiii. 5.*

CXXVII.

M E P H I B O S H E T H .



DAVID had promised to be kind to Jonathan's children; did he forget his promise? No; he still remembered and loved Jonathan, and wished to be kind to his family; so he called Ziba, an old servant of Saul, and said, "Tell me, are there any of Saul's children living now, that I may show the kindness of God to them?" Ziba said, "Yes; there is a son of Jonathan, named Mephibosheth, still alive; and he is lame in his feet." Then David told Ziba to go and bring Mephibosheth.

How had Mephibosheth become lame? That sad day when his poor father was killed in battle, his nurse took him up in haste to carry him away, and he fell out of her arms. The fall hurt the little boy, and he was always lame afterwards. Me-

phibosheth was then only five years old; but now he was a young man.

Mephibosheth felt alarmed when the king sent for him, and he fell on his face before David. But David spoke to him very gently and affectionately; he remembered Jonathan, and he loved Mephibosheth, because he was Jonathan's son. David said to him, "Fear not; I will show thee kindness for Jonathan's sake. I will give thee again all the land which belonged to Saul, and thou shalt eat every day at my table." Then Mephibosheth bowed again before David, and thanked him for his kindness.

David called Ziba, and said, "I have given all Saul's possessions to Mephibosheth; thou and thy sons must take care of the land for him; and bring the fruits to him; but he shall eat always at my table."

Ziba promised to obey the king. He was a rich man, and had many servants who helped him to take care of Mephibosheth's land. Mephibosheth had a house in Jerusalem where he lived; but every day he dined with the king, and David honored and loved him very much.

God always pities those who have no power to help themselves; and promises to be their friend if they trust in Him. Jesus Christ used to love the blind, and lame, and deaf and dumb people who came to Him. He did good to them all. And Christ's people try to do as He did; they pity and help those who

are in trouble. David was kind, and generous, and pitiful; we must pray God to make us so too. Mephibosheth was an affectionate, grateful friend to David. David did much for him, and he was thankful for it. Ingratitude is a sad sin. When people are kind to us, and help us, and pity us, we ought to love and thank them very much. How can we show our gratitude? Perhaps we cannot give anything to our kind friends to repay them, but we can show our thankfulness by loving them; and trying to please them in all things; and by asking God to bless them.

CXXVIII.

DAVID'S SIN.



WE are now going to read a very sad story about David.

There was a man named Uriah, who had a wife named Bathsheba. Bathsheba was very beautiful; and David loved her very much, and wanted to marry her; but he knew he must not, because she was Uriah's wife. God says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife;" and it was very wicked of David to do what God had commanded him not to do. But David did not then ask God to help him resist sin, and, therefore, he soon became more wicked still. He wished Uriah were dead. He could not put him to death; but he sent him to fight, and hoped he would be killed in the battle.

The Israelites were then fighting with the Ammonites, and Joab was

captain of David's soldiers; so David wrote a letter to Joab, and said, "Set Uriah in the battle; let him stand in the front, and do not help him; but leave him alone, that he may be smitten and die." Then David sent for Uriah, and pretended to be very kind to him; and gave him the letter, and sent him to Joab. When Joab had finished reading the letter, he called Uriah, and told him to stand in the front of the battle, in a very dangerous place. Uriah did not know why he was to stand there; but he did as Joab commanded; and very soon he was slain by his enemies, and fell down dead. Then Joab sent and told David.

Was David sorry? No, he was glad; because he could now do as he wished, and marry Bathsheba. Satan was tempting David, and

David was not trying to resist the temptation. He did not ask help from God; so God turned away from David, and left him to himself. Bethsheba mourned for her husband some time; and when the mourning was past, David sent for her, and married her, and she became his wife.

David had his wish now; but had he God's blessing? No, he had made God angry. God's eye had seen all his wickedness; his secret sins; he could not hide them from God. But David did not yet feel his sin, nor ask for forgiveness.

One day, Nathan the prophet came to see David. Nathan did not now bring a message of love from God, he had something very sad to say to David; but he did not at once tell him about his wickedness, for God wanted David himself to feel and confess his sin. Nathan began by telling this story to David. He said, "There were two men living in a city; one was rich and had great possessions; sheep, and oxen, and cattle. The other man was very poor; he had only one little lamb. He loved this lamb very much; it eat out of his hand; drank out of his cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. One day, a friend came to see the rich man, and to eat with him. But the rich man would not kill his own sheep; he went to the poor man's house, and took away the little lamb, and killed it, and dressed it for his friend." When Nathan had finished the story, David said angrily, "The man who has done this, shall surely die, because he had no pity." Then Nathan looked at David, and said,

"Thou art the man. God gave thee riches and possessions; many, many things. But what hast thou done? Thou has killed Uriah with the sword, and taken away his wife to be thy wife. And now God must punish thee, the sword shall never depart from thy house. Thou hast sinned secretly; but God saw the sin, and He will punish it openly."

David now felt his wickedness; he felt how sad it is to displease God. He did not try to deny, nor excuse his sin; but he confessed humbly at once, "I have sinned against the Lord." Could God forgive David? Yes; God is always willing to forgive the greatest sinners. He only wants them to repent, and to turn to Him and ask for pardon, and then He is ready to forgive. Nathan said to David, "God has taken away thy sin; thou shalt not die." But God punished David, although He forgave him. He did not strike David dead, but He smote his little child, and it was very sick. David felt sad when he saw his poor child suffering, and remembered that his sin made it suffer. He humbled himself before God, and prayed for pardon; he ate no food, and lay all night upon the ground, and asked God to make his dear child well again. He offered up the prayer we read in the fifty-first psalm; "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

God heard the prayer. He forgave David's sin; but He would not raise the child. It must die: God must punish David. The poor babe grew worse and worse; and at last, after seven days, it died. David's servants were afraid at first to tell their master that the child was dead. But David saw the servants whispering together, and looking very sad: and he asked, "Is the child dead?" And they said, "He is dead." Then David arose, and washed away his tears, and went to the house of the Lord, and worshipped; and afterwards, he came

home to his own house, and ate bread. He felt comforted now, because he knew that God had forgiven him. He was sorry for his child; but he knew that it was gone to a better world, where there is no pain nor sorrow, and where he would see it again when he died: he said, "I shall go to him; but he shall not return to me." Then David went and comforted Bathsheba; and soon, God in His mercy, gave them another child. They called it Solomon, and God loved and blessed it; and he blessed too His penitent humble servant David.

CXXIX.

A B S A L O M.



DAVID now had new troubles. When he was young, he was troubled by Saul; when he was old, he was troubled by his own children. God sent sorrow to David now, to punish his sin. Sin is always the cause of sorrow.

David had many sons; and some of them were very wicked. One was named Absalom, and another Amnon. These two brothers did not live in love and peace together; Absalom hated Amnon, and would not speak to him. Hatred was in the heart of Absalom a long time, and it grew stronger and stronger, till at last he determined to kill his brother Amnon; for he could not rest while he lived.

Hatred often ends in murder. The Bible says, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." When we feel anger beginning to rise in

our hearts, we ought to ask God to take it away, and make us full of love. We cannot tell how hatred may end.

How did Absalom kill his brother? He thought he would kill him slyly, without his father's knowledge; so he made a great feast and invited all his brothers; and commanded his servants to kill Amnon when he came. Amnon came to the feast. And when they were all merry, the servants rushed in, and smote Amnon, and killed him. All his brothers were frightened, and fled; and Absalom fled too, because he was afraid that David might punish him for the murder.

The king soon heard the sad story; and he arose, and rent his clothes, and lay on the ground, and wept; and all his sons wept too.

Where was Absalom? He escaped to Geshur, and staid there

three years. David did not see him all that time. One son was gone away; and another son was dead. David mourned for them both. At last, Joab came to the king, and begged that Absalom might come home. David wanted to forgive his wicked son, for he still loved him; so he told Joab to send, and bring Absalom from Geshur. But David would not see his son; so Absalom staid at his own house in Jerusalem. Was David right to let Absalom come back? No; Absalom was a wicked murderer, and God had commanded murderers to be put to death; but David loved Absalom, and spared him. All the people admired him, and liked to look at him. But God did not like to look at him. God looks at people's hearts, not at their persons. He does not care for beauty; He wants holiness, and love, and gentleness, and humility; and Absalom had none of these.

Two years passed after Absalom's return, and David had not seen him. Then Absalom began to be impatient and angry. He was not sorry for his sin; but he did not like to be punished. He sent for Joab, but Joab did not come. Then Absalom sent again, but still Joab did not come. At last Absalom grew very angry. There was a field, belonging to Joab, near Absalom's house; and Absalom, in his passion, sent his servants to set it on fire. When Joab saw his field burning, he went to Absalom, and asked, "Why have thy servants set my field on fire?" Absalom answered, "Because I sent for thee, and thou didst not come. Go now to the king, and ask why I am come from Geshur; I might as

well have staid there still. Let me see the king's face." This was a very disrespectful message to his father. Absalom did not show himself sorry for his wickedness, and willing to be humble and obedient. But David loved his son so much, that, when he heard the message, he sent for Absalom, for he wished to forgive him. So Absalom came to his father, and bowed before him; and the king kissed Absalom.

Absalom pretended to be sorry, but he was not truly so; his heart was full of pride and rebellion still. Soon after, he prepared chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. And when he saw the people going to the king for judgment, he often called to them, and spoke kindly to them, and asked them what they wanted; for Absalom wished to make the people love him more than they loved his father. He wanted to be king himself; and said he should be a better king than David. The people attended to what Absalom said, and many of them promised to obey and love him as their king. David knew nothing about this, for Absalom was very sly, and deceived his father. He said to David, "Let me go now and pay my vow in Hebron: for I vowed when I was in Geshur, that if the Lord would bring me back to Jerusalem, then I would serve Him." David was pleased to hear this; for he hoped his disobedient son was going to begin to love and serve the Lord; so he said to Absalom, "Go in peace."

Why did Absalom go to Hebron? Not to offer sacrifice, not to worship God: he went there to make himself king. He told the people when

they heard the trumpet, to shout, and say, "Absalom reigns in Hebron." Very many of the people were in the conspiracy, but a few were still faithful to David; and a messenger came, and told him the news about his wicked son's rebellion.

What could David do? He had very little time to think; for Absalom might soon come to Jerusalem and kill him, and the faithful people. So David said, "Let us arise and flee." All David's servants were ready to follow him; and they went away from Jerusalem as fast as possible, and came to the brook Kidron. •

All the people wept with a loud voice, when they saw their master escaping from his cruel son.

Who were with David? His servants, and soldiers, and many of his faithful friends; and the priests and Levites with the ark of God. But when they had passed over the brook, David told the priests to carry the ark back to the city. He hoped God would have mercy on him, and bring him back there too; but if not he was willing for God to do as He pleased; for he knew all He did would be right. The priests were to go to Jerusalem; and David said he

would stay in the wilderness till they sent for him. So the priests, Zadok and Abiathar, carried the ark back, and David and his friends went on to Mount Olivet. As David went up the hill, he wept, and all the people wept too; for they did not know if they should ever return home again.

David heard that a man named Ahithophel was among the conspirators. Ahithophel was a very wicked man. But David knew that God was wiser than Ahithophel, and he prayed to be delivered from Ahithophel's power.

When they came to the top of the mountain, David worshipped God. In all his troubles he had one friend who never forsook him: God was always near to help and comfort him. When Jesus was upon earth, he loved to go to Mount Olivet to pray. It was a quiet place, where he might be alone. Jesus had more sorrows than David. He knows what trouble is; and He can comfort His people when they are in trouble. He sees all their sorrows, and feels for them when they are in difficulty and pain; and will give them comfort when all earthly friends have forsaken them.

CXXX.

DAVID'S FLIGHT.



WHEN David had passed the top of the hill, he saw a man coming to meet him. It was Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth; he had brought some bread and fruit, and wine to David, for the men to eat when they were tired and faint in the wilderness. Then David asked about Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth could not come himself to David, and his cruel servant told a lie, and accused him falsely to the king; and said he was staying at Jerusalem, hoping that the people would come and make him king. David felt sorry and angry to hear this. He did not know that it was untrue; so he gave to Ziba all the possessions which he had before given to Mephibosheth. Then David went on to Bahurim, where he had a new sorrow. A wicked man named Shimei, came out, and cursed him, and threw stones at him, and said God was punishing him now for all his cruelty to Saul; and would take away the kingdom and give it to Absalom. This wicked man did not speak the truth. God was indeed punishing David, but not because David was cruel to Saul. He was punishing him for murdering Uriah.

David's friends were very angry with Shimei: they did not like to hear their master so cruelly accused, and they said they would kill this wicked man. But David would not let them. He knew all these troubles came from God, and he humbly submitted to him. So David and his men went on quietly, with

out attending to Shimei. Shimei's curses could not hurt David because God was his friend, and took care of him still. He was safe in God's hands; for God punished him in love to make him humble and holy. And David knew this.

Where was Absalom now? He went to Jerusalem to his father's house, and there he consulted with his friends what he should do. Ahithophel gave very wicked advice to Absalom. He told him how to make himself king, and how to conquer David. But God was wiser than Ahithophel, and He made Absalom unwilling to attend to him. There was a friend of David with Absalom, named Hushai. Hushai pretended to be Absalom's friend, and listened to all the wicked prince said; and when he found that Absalom was determined to go to battle against his father, he told the priests, and they told David. So David made his soldiers ready to go and fight against Absalom.

Was Ahithophel with Absalom now? No, when he saw that Absalom did not attend to his advice, he was very much displeased. He went home and gave commands to his family; and then he went away and hanged himself and died! Why? Because he was angry that his advice was not followed.

David's soldiers were now going to fight against Absalom. David must fight against his own son! But he still loved his son, and he told the captains to be gentle with wicked Absalom. The battle was in the

wood of Ephraim. David's soldiers soon conquered the rebellious people; and twenty thousand were slain. Absalom rode upon a mule, and tried to escape; but as he went through the wood, his long hair caught in the branches of an oak, and "he was taken up between the heaven and the earth." The mule went away, and Absalom hung in the oak; so that he could not escape. One of David's soldiers saw Absalom hanging, but the man did not hurt him, because he remembered David's command; but he told Joab; and Joab took three darts, and went to the tree where Absalom hung, and smote him, and killed him. So the battle was ended, and David's soldiers had the victory.

But where was David himself? He did not see the battle. He was waiting by the gate of the city Mahanaim to hear the news; and the watchman went up to the top of the wall to look. At last the watchman saw a man running, and he told the king. Then David began to tremble; he felt very much afraid. Soon after, another man was seen running. The first soon came to David, and fell down, and said, "God has delivered up the men who lifted their hand against the king." But David thought most about his son; and he asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The messenger said, "I cannot tell." Then the other man came to David, and said, "The Lord has avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee." But David could not attend to the victory; he thought only about Absalom, and he cried again, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The

messenger did not wish to grieve the king; he could not then tell him the whole of the sad story; he only said, "May the king's enemies all be as that young man is now." David understood what this meant; he knew how it was with Absalom; and he could not bear to hear more. He arose directly and went to his own room, for he wished to be alone; and as he went up, he cried very, very sorrowfully, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"

This is a sad story. Absalom knew what was right. He had learned what he ought to do. David had taught him to serve God; he had talked to him about holy things; he had prayed for him. But Absalom had not attended; he had not prayed for himself; he had not cared about God. God is angry with those children who will not attend to their parents' and teachers' holy lessons.

Joab did not like David to mourn so much for Absalom. All the people were very glad that the rebels were conquered, and Joab wanted David to go and speak comfortably to them. Joab was a wise captain, but he was not a kind friend. He was not gentle to David in his trouble. When our friends are unhappy, we ought to speak very kindly to them, and try to comfort them; but Joab spoke very harshly to David.

David could not forget his poor son, but he knew that he must not be idle when there was so much for him to do; so he attended to Joab and arose, and sat by the gate, and his people came to him. They were very glad to see him again; and to

hear him speak kindly to them; and the men of Judah came to bring him home to Jerusalem. So he made ready, and went over Jordan; and many of his friends met him there and brought a boat to carry some of his family and things across the river. Ziba came, and his servants and his sons, and Shimei came too. Shimei was humble now, and asked David to forgive him the wicked words he had used. David promised not to punish him; but Shimei was not truly sorry for his sin; he was a wicked man still.

There was a very old man who lived at Rogelim, named Barzillai. He was eighty years old. He loved the king very much, and had given him many things at Mahanaim; and now he came to Jordan to go over with David, and to bid him farewell, for Barzillai wanted to show his love and respect for his king. David loved this kind old man, and wished him to come and live with him in Jerusalem. But Barzillai answered, "No, I am too old to go so far; I cannot live long; my hearing, and sight, and taste, are all gone; and soon I shall go too. I must return to my city, and die there, and lie down in my grave. But here is my son Chimham, he shall go to Jerusalem with the king."

Then David kissed and blessed good old Barzillai, and they parted. Barzillai went home, to stay there till he went to another and better home in heaven.

When David came near to Jerusalem, Mephibosheth met him. What Ziba had said of him was not true. Mephibosheth loved the king, and had mourned very much when David was away. David said, "Why wentest thou not with me?" Mephibosheth answered, "My servant deceived me; I wished to follow thee upon an ass, because I cannot walk, for I am lame. And Ziba has falsely accused me." Then David gave Mephibosheth some of his lands again; and was friendly with him as before.

David now returned to Jerusalem; and his people submitted to him, and all was peace again, for God gave him deliverance from all his enemies.

This is a world of trouble. David had many sorrows; but he knew where to find comfort; God was his refuge and strength in them all. Let us pray God to be our friend too; and then we need not fear any troubles, nor any enemies. We shall have comfort here on earth, and everlasting peace in the heavenly Jerusalem above.

CXXXI.

THE GIBEONITES AVENGED:



ABOUT this time, God sent a famine upon the land of Judah; it continued year after year, for three years.

David knew that there must be some reason for this; he feared that God was displeased, and was punishing his people for some sin; so he determined to go and inquire of God why this dreadful famine was sent. And God told David why it was. He said, "It is for Saul, and for his family, because he slew the Gibeonites."

You remember who the Gibeonites were. They were those people who, in the time of Joshua, had behaved so deceitfully, that they might persuade the Israelites to make peace with them. And Joshua and the Israelites did make peace with the Gibeonites, and promised not to destroy them, but to allow them to remain always among the people of Israel. But Saul had broken his solemn promise; he had slain some of these Gibeonites, and this had displeased God, and caused Him to punish the land by the famine.

When David knew why the famine was sent, he determined directly to put away the sin which had made God so angry. So he sent to the Gibeonites, and said, "What shall I do for you, and how shall I make an atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord?" Then the Gibeonites answered, "We will have neither silver nor gold, but let seven of the sons of the man who consumed us, be delivered unto

us, and we will hang them up before the Lord in Gibeah of Saul." David promised to do as the Gibeonites required, but he spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, because of the Lord's oath that was between them,—between David and Jonathan the son of Saul. But the king took seven men of the family of Saul, and delivered them up; and the Gibeonites "hanged them in the hill before the Lord; and they fell all seven together." Then Rizpah, the mother of two of them, took sackcloth, and spread it on the rock, and there she sat watching the dead bodies of her sons, and mourning over them; and she suffered neither the birds to rest on them by day, nor the beasts by night. David heard what Rizpah had done, and no doubt he pitied her, and felt for her; and he showed all the honor and kindness he could to Saul's family, by gathering their bones and burying them with the bodies of those who were hanged. Though David felt he must be just, yet he could show kindness and pity too.

And now what are we to learn from this story? It shows us what a solemn thing a promise is, and how angry God is if we forget or break our promises. God never forgets His promises: and He commands us to remember ours. The story teaches us too, that it is right to be just,—to punish those who do wrong according to what they deserve. This is the duty of kings and rulers, and they should do it,

as David did, though it may distress and vex them, because it is God's command. "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. A

ruler should be "the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Rom xiii. 4.

CXXXII.

THE NUMBERING OF THE PEOPLE.

DAVID had rest from his earthly enemies. But there was one enemy who troubled him still. Who?

Not Saul, not the Philistines, nor the Amalekites, nor Absalom; it was not an enemy like these who troubled him now. It was Satan, the enemy of our souls. Satan will be our enemy as long as we live. Every day we must fight against him, because he tries every day to make us sin. Can we conquer him? Not in our own strength, but God's Holy Spirit will conquer him for us, if we ask Him. David had often tried to resist Satan; he had asked God's help, and then he had conquered temptations. But sometimes David forgot to pray, and then Satan conquered him.

How did Satan tempt David now? He tempted him to be very proud. When David thought of all his power, and possessions, and riches, he felt pleased to see how great he was. Was this right? No; it is right to be thankful and contented, but not to be proud of what we have. David called Joab, and told him to go, and count all the people in the kingdom, that he might know how many there were. Joab knew that this was wrong; and he

tried to persuade David not to number the people; but David would not attend to his advice. Joab was not a good man; but now he was right, and David was wrong; because David was trusting in his own strength, and not asking to be taught of God. So Joab went through all Canaan, to count the people, and brought the number of them to David. There were many thousands in Israel then; and, perhaps, David felt very much pleased when Joab gave the sum of them.

David soon felt how wicked he had been; and then he was very sorry, and asked God's forgiveness; and did God forgive David? Yes, but he punished him for His sin. Next morning, a messenger came to David. It was Gad, the prophet of the Lord; and he brought a very sad message to David. He said, God had sent him to say, that He must punish David for his sin; and he offered him one of these three punishments: three years' famine, or three months to be destroyed before his enemies; or three days' plague in the land; and David was to choose which it should be. David felt it hard to make a choice, but he submitted patiently to God's

will; for he knew it was right that his sin should be punished. But what did he choose? He said, "Let us fall into the hand of God, for his mercy is great, and let us not fall into the hand of man." Then Gad understood that David chose the plague.

It was a fearful time for Israel, when God sent the destroying angel among them. David had been proud of the number of his subjects, and now God took very many of them away to humble David's pride. But did the Israelites deserve to be punished? Yes; they too had displeased God: and they were punished, as well as their king.

A plague is a dreadful thing. There have been plagues in England. Many years ago there was a dreadful plague in London, when hundreds of people died every day. They were ill a very little time: one hour they were well, and the next hour they were dead. Every morning a cart used to go through the streets; and a man rang a bell, and cried, "Bring out your dead." Then the doors of the houses were opened, and the dead bodies were carried out, and put in the cart, and thrown into great holes; for there was no time to make coffins for them. All the houses were shut up, and everybody was trembling for fear, and thinking, "Perhaps I shall die next." Could any people be happy and peaceful then? Yes; those people who were ready to die had no cause for fear. Death could not really hurt them: it could only take them to Heaven, far away from all sickness and sorrow for ever.

Three days the dreadful plague

lasted in Canaan. The angel went through the country, destroying wherever he went; and, at last, he came to Jerusalem, where David lived. David looked up, and saw the angel standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand. The sword was over Jerusalem, ready to strike and destroy it. Then David fell on his face before God, and cried for mercy. He knew how merciful God was, and that He did not wish to destroy all His people; that He is more willing to forgive than to punish; so David said, "It is I who sinned; I commanded the people to be numbered: I have done wickedly. Punish me, but spare my people, for what have they done?" And did God hear David's prayer? Yes; he sent Gad again with a kind message to David. God said, that David must build an altar, and offer up sacrifices; and then He promised to forgive.

There was a good man named Araunah, who had a threshing-floor; and God told David to build his altar in that threshing-floor. While Araunah was threshing wheat with his sons, he looked up, and saw the angel standing near; and he and his sons hid themselves for fear. But when David came, Araunah went out, and bowed respectfully before the king. Then David told Araunah what God had said, and he asked to buy the threshing-floor, to build the altar there. Araunah was very generous, and wanted to give all to David: but David said, "No; I am going to offer a sacrifice to God, and I will not give Him what costs me nothing." So David bought the threshing-floor, and wood, and oxen; and built an altar, and offered

sacrifices upon it, and called upon God; and God accepted David's sacrifice, and sent fire down from Heaven upon the offering, and commanded the angel to take away the sword, and destroy no more.

CXXXIII.

DAVID'S DEATH.



DAVID was now an old man, and he knew that he must soon die. You remember, that, some years before, he had wished to build a house for God; but God had said, "Thou shalt not build it, but thy son Solomon shall build it after thy death." David now thought much about this temple, and began to get the stones, and the wood, and the iron, all ready for Solomon. Then he called Solomon, and said, "God has said, thou shalt build His house, and He will give thee knowledge and wisdom to do it. Trust in the Lord, and then all will be well with thee. I have prepared for the work. Here are gold, and silver, and brass, and wood, and iron. Arise and work, and God shall be with thee."

Were David's troubles all ended now? No; he had a new sorrow just before his death. Another wicked son rebelled against him. This was Adonijah. Solomon was the right king after David; God had chosen him; but Adonijah was a wicked and ambitious man, and he said, "I will be king." David knew nothing of this conspiracy till Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, went to the king, and told him, and then she asked if her son Solomon was not the right king after David, because God had chosen him. David

was sorry to hear what Adonijah had done; but he comforted Bathsheba, and said, Solomon should be king. So David called Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and commanded them to take Solomon, and make him king. Then they put Solomon upon a mule, and brought him to Gihon; and there Zadock anointed him; and all the people blew with trumpets, and shouted, "God save king Solomon."

Where was Adonijah? He was feasting with his friends. Two of these were Joab and Abiathar. They had now forsaken David and followed the rebellious Adonijah. They were not true friends to David. Adonijah and his company heard a great noise, and wondered what it was; and soon they were told that the people were shouting and rejoicing, because David had made Solomon king. Then all the conspirators were afraid. They knew they had done wrong; and were frightened, as wicked people always are when their crimes are found out. They all ran away, and Adonijah himself escaped to the altar for safety. Solomon, though he was now king, did not punish the wicked conspirators. He called Adonijah, and forgave him, and sent him home, and all was quiet again, and Solomon reigned in peace.

And now the time came for David

to die; so he called his dear son Solomon, to give him his last commands, and to bid him farewell. David told Solomon to remember that wicked man Joab, and punish him as a murderer, because he killed Abner, many years before, and deserved to die. And Shimei, too, who had cursed David, was to be punished as Solomon should think right. But David charged Solomon to be kind to Barzillai, who had been so kind to David when he was in sorrow and trouble. Did David feel angry and revengeful when he was dying? No; but he knew that wicked men must be punished, because this is God's command. Good kings must be just; they must punish those who disobey God's laws.

Did David say anything more to Solomon? Yes; for David felt very anxious about him.

He wished him to love and serve God, and to teach his people in the right way; and David knew that Solomon could not reign well, if God did not help and bless him. So David spoke very affectionately, and very solemnly to Solomon, and said, "My son, know thou the God

of thy fathers, my God who has kept me all my life long. Serve Him with all thy heart, sincerely and willingly; for God knows the heart. He knows who truly love Him, and who only pretend to love him. He is ready to hear thy prayer; and if thou seek Him, thou shalt find Him; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever." Then David looked up to Heaven, and sang a beautiful song of praise to God. All his troubles were ended now; God was with him; he closed his eyes in peace, and his happy soul went to be for ever in Heaven, far away from all sin and sorrow.

If we, like David, are ready to die; if we are at peace with God through Jesus Christ, having our sins all washed away, and our hearts made new by his Holy Spirit; then, like David, we may look forward to death with happiness and joy. Then we may say, as he did in one of his beautiful Psalms, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod, and thy staff, they comfort me." *Psalms xxxiii. 4.*

CXXXIV.

KING SOLOMON.



SOLOMON was now king. His reign was a very happy one; not like David's, full of sorrow and trouble. But some sad things happened in the beginning of Solomon's reign. Adonijah rebelled again, and was put to death. Joab, too, was slain, because he was in Adonijah's conspiracy, and because of the murders he had formerly committed. Abiathar was sent away. Solomon could not let him be priest any longer, for he also had rebelled with Adonijah; but Solomon did not put him to death, because he had once been a kind friend to David. Was Shimei killed? Not at first; Solomon commanded him to stay quietly at his own house in Jerusalem, and promised him safety there; but if he went away from Jerusalem, Solomon told him he should die. Shimei stayed at his house three years; and then he disobeyed the king, and went to Achish, at Gath. Shimei soon returned to Jerusalem; but he had disobeyed Solomon, and therefore he was slain. All this was very sad, but we know it was right for these wicked men to die. Sin must be punished. Perhaps God does not punish it directly; He waits many years; He gives time for repentance; for he does not wish people to die in their wickedness. God is ready to save all, and He will forgive the most wicked people, if they repent and turn to Him. But if not, He cannot wait for ever. He cannot forget sin which is unrepented of,

and unforgiven; not washed away in the blood of Jesus. At last He will punish all rebellious sinners, as He punished wicked Adonijah, and Joab, and Shimei, after so many years.

All was quiet now: Solomon could reign in peace, because his wicked enemies were dead. And did he remember all that his father had told him? Did he try to serve God, and to teach his people to serve Him too? Yes, Solomon loved the Lord. He was young, and did not yet know much; but he wished and prayed to know more.

Solomon went to Gibeon, to sacrifice there. The tabernacle which Moses made, was at Gibeon, and the brazen altar. But the ark was at Jerusalem, in the tent which David had made for it. Solomon offered a thousand burnt-offerings upon the altar at Gibeon. He had great possessions, and he liked to give much of what he had to God. He wanted to show his love and his thankfulness to Him. And Solomon offered his sacrifices in faith.

When the sacrifices were ended, and Solomon lay down to sleep, God appeared to him in a dream. God came to encourage and to comfort young Solomon. He spoke to him, and said, "Ask, what I shall give thee." How kind God was, to promise Solomon to give him what he asked! What did Solomon choose? Did he choose riches, or possessions, or honors? No, he wanted what was better than these. He knew that worldly things must

soon pass away; he wished for something which he could never, never lose. He said, "Lord, I am very young and ignorant. I have no power to teach my people in the right way. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, a wise and understanding heart; that I may know how to rule my people as it shall please Thee." Did God give Solomon what he asked? Yes; God was pleased with his choice. Solomon had asked for the best thing; heavenly wisdom, not worldly possessions. God said, "I have given thee wisdom and understanding: and I will give thee more; I will give thee what thou hast not asked; riches, and possessions, and honors: and if thou wilt serve me, and obey my commands, I will bless thee, and keep thee all thy life long." Then Solomon awoke, and found it was a dream. But how happy he felt now!

God was with him; He had heard his prayer, and promised to love and bless him, and to be his friend.

We all want wisdom. We are poor, weak, ignorant creatures; we know nothing good of ourselves; we only know what is evil. How can we become wise? Will God give us holy wisdom, as He did Solomon? Yes, St. James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him." The best wisdom is the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ, and of the way to heaven. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." *Job xxviii. 28.* This is better than all the riches in the world. It will make us happy now, and for ever. How can we get it? Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you." *Matthew vii. 7.*

CXXXV.

THE TWO MOTHERS.



SOLOMON went to Jerusalem, and there offered more sacrifices to the Lord. And now he began to show his great wisdom. Two women came to the king for judgment. They had with them two little babes. One was alive and well, but the other was dead. The women were angry, and quarrelling with each other. One said, "O my lord, I and this woman live together in one house. We had each a little son. Her child died in the night; and when she found it was dead, she brought it to me, and

laid it in my arms, when I was asleep, and stole away my own baby from me; and when I awoke, and looked at the dead child in my arms, I knew it was not mine." But the other cried angrily, "The living child is mine." So they spoke before the king. It was sad to see them so angry and passionate, but what could Solomon do? How could he know the right mother of the living child? His wonderful wisdom which God had given him, helped Solomon to judge rightly. He said, "Bring me a sword." His servants brought the sword, and

then Solomon said, "Divide the living child in two, and give half to one woman, and half to the other." Was Solomon cruel? No, he wanted to know who was the right mother. He knew she would be very sorry to see her child killed, and would cry to have it saved; but the other woman, who was not the true mother, would not care so much. And he thought rightly. The true mother cried, "Oh, do not divide the child. Give it to the other woman, she may have it all; but O do not kill it." But the other woman said, "Yes, let it be divided;" for she did not care much for the baby, because it was not her own child. Then Solomon said, "I know now who is the right mother of the living child. It is the woman who loves it so much that she cannot

bear to have it killed. Give her the child, and let them go." So Solomon gave the living babe to the right mother, and sent the women away; and all the people wondered at Solomon's wisdom.

There is one parent who loves His children more than any mother can. Who is this? God, our heavenly Father. He says to his children, "A mother may forget her little ones, but I will never forget you." Earthly parents may die, and leave their children, or go away and forget them; but those are happy children who have God for their father, for He will never forsake them. David says, "When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up." *Psalms xxvii. 10.*

CXXXVI.

SOLOMON'S WISDOM.

WAS Solomon a very happy king? Yes, he had much to make him happy. He had riches, and possessions, and honors, and knowledge. Could these things make him truly happy? No, but Solomon had something more and better than all; he had God's love and blessing. Solomon was very wise; he understood many things, and wrote many learned books. He wrote about animals, and trees, and flowers. He knew the names and the histories of them all. It is very pleasant to have much knowledge; and when we learn about the wonderful works of God, the beautiful

animals and plants around us, and the sun, and moon, and stars, which we see shining so brightly in the sky, we should praise God who gave them all to us, and thank and bless Him. It is right to wish for knowledge, and children ought to be very attentive to those who teach them, and very anxious to become wise. But we must not be proud of what we know. Solomon knew more than any man ever knew, but he was not proud. None of us know much. We are all ignorant, and we ought all to be humble. God alone knows all things; the past, the present, the future, every thing, every where, He knows. How wonderful God is!

But what is the best knowledge, the best wisdom? The knowledge of God and of heavenly things. All earthly wisdom must soon end; but holy, heavenly wisdom will last for ever. If we ask God for this, He will teach us more and more of it, while we live; and at last, take us to heaven, where we shall know and see things which we cannot understand here.

What books did Solomon write? He wrote the book of Proverbs, and the book of Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon, and many beautiful Psalms. He wrote much for young people. He wanted to teach them to love and serve God. Solomon told the young people, that riches and pleasures could not make them happy; he said, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit;" and then he advised them to begin to serve the Lord, before it should be too late. He said, "Remember *now* thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" for he knew how happy they would be if God was their father and their friend.

Solomon now began to think of David's command, and prepared to build the temple of God. He wrote to Hiram, the king of Tyre, to tell him what he wished to do. Solomon asked Hiram to send him cedar trees from Lebanon, to build the house of the Lord. Then Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, "I will do all thy wish, and give thee cedar trees and fir trees from the forest in Lebanon. My servants shall cut them down, and bring them to the sea; and I will send them by sea to the place thou shalt choose." Then Solomon began the work directly. He sent many of his servants to Lebanon, to help Hiram's servants to cut down the trees. Then all the wood was carried to the sea, and floated down to Joppa; and there Solomon sent his people to take the wood, and bring it safely to Jerusalem. Hiram and Solomon were great friends, and they helped one another to work for God's service and glory. Those are the best friends who try to help one another to serve God.

OXXXVII.

THE TEMPLE.



THE temple which Solomon made was a very beautiful building. It was made of cedar wood, wonderfully carved, and overlaid with gold. Within the house was the oracle, the holy place, like the holy of holies in the tabernacle, where the ark was to be placed. The oracle was divided from the other part of the house by doors, beauti-

fully carved, and overlaid with gold, and a thick veil of red, and purple, and blue, hung before the oracle. Inside the oracle, Solomon put beautiful golden cherubim, like the cherubim in the tabernacle. He made too an altar of brass, and a great basin or sea, with the figures of twelve oxen round the basin; and ten tables, and ten lavers, and ten golden candlesticks. These things

were outside the oracle. All the holy vessels were made of gold.

Solomon's servants were industrious, and did the work very quickly; but seven years passed before the temple was finished. Then Solomon called all Israel to come to the great feast, when the temple was to be dedicated to God. The priests brought the ark, and all the holy vessels; and they put the ark in the oracle, under the wings of the cherubim. In the ark were the tables of stone, which God had given to Moses so many years before. When the priests came out of the holy place, the cloud filled the house. The bright glory of the Lord was there. All the people stood in holy reverence, while the king blessed them, and prayed to the Lord. Solomon prayed that God would always bless His holy temple, and hear the prayers of his people there. He knew that he and his people would often be in trouble, and difficulty, and sorrow. Perhaps their enemies might fight against them; or there might be a plague or famine in Israel. Who could help them then? Only God; so Solomon prayed that when, in these times of sorrow, he and his people should go and pray in the holy temple, God would hear, and answer, and bless them.

When Solomon had ended his prayer, he rose from his knees, and blessed the people again. It was a beautiful sight. The good king praising God, and blessing his people, and the people attending to all he said, and praying to God too; and all the house filled with God's glory. Then they offered sacrifices to the Lord; and He accepted those

sacrifices, because they were offered in faith; and He blessed the people. Then Solomon made a great feast, and afterwards sent the people away full of joy and gladness.

And now God appeared again to Solomon. It was by night when Solomon was asleep. What did God say? He told Solomon that He had heard his prayer. He said, "I have blessed my house, and I will hear the prayers which my people make to me there. And if thou wilt obey and serve me, as David thy father did, then will I bless thee and keep thee for ever. But if thou and thy people forget me, and serve and worship idol gods, then I will forsake you. I will not then attend to your prayers. I will turn away from you and bless you no more."

How happy Solomon and his people were, to have the promise of God's blessing when they were faithful to Him! In all their troubles and difficulties they might go to His holy temple, and pray there, and He would hear them. We have holy temples too. The churches where we may go every Sabbath Day, are dedicated to God, and He promises to hear the prayers of His people there. We ought to be very thankful for these holy temples, and very glad to go to them. And when we are in God's house, we should remember what a holy place it is. God is there. We cannot see His bright glory, and the cloud which Israel saw; but we know that His Spirit is there, to bless and teach His people. Jesus says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." *Matt. xviii. 20.*

CXXXVIII.

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA.

WHEN Solomon had finished the temple, he built a beautiful house for himself. He built also many cities, and a house for his queen, and a navy of ships. The ships used to go every year to distant countries, to bring back gold, and silver, and ivory, and apes, and peacocks. People in those distant lands wondered very much, when they heard about Solomon's riches and wisdom. Many came to Jerusalem to see the king, and to hear his wisdom; and they brought presents with them; gold, and silver, and garments, and spices, and horses and mules. So Solomon became more and more rich. He had 1,400 chariots, and 12,000 horsemen. All his vessels were made of gold, and his throne was of ivory overlaid with gold. There were six steps going up to the throne, and the figures of lions upon the steps, and he had in his house many other beautiful things. He could have all he wanted, because he was so very rich.

There was a queen who came to see Solomon from a very distant country. The country where she lived is called Sheba in the Bible. We do not now know a country named Sheba; perhaps it was in Arabia or Abyssinia. This queen heard a great deal in her own country about Solomon, and she wanted to see him. It was a long journey to Jerusalem, but she did not care for the trouble and difficulty, because she

wished so much to see Solomon. She brought with her a great many servants, and camels, and gold, and spices, to give to the king. Was Solomon glad to see her? Yes, he was kind to the good queen; he showed her all his possessions; his house, and his throne, and his servants, and the temple of God. Then the queen asked him many questions, and he answered them all. He told her about the worship and service of the true God; and of all the wonderful things He did for His people Israel. This was new to the Queen of Sheba; she had never heard of these things in her own country, and she was glad to learn about them. She attended to all the king told her, and after he had finished, she said, "When I was in my own country, I heard of thy wisdom; it was very little I heard there, yet I could not then believe it; but now that I have seen all, I find thy wisdom and thy possessions are much, much greater than I thought. Happy are thy servants who stand by thee, and hear thy wisdom. Happy are the people who have thee for their king, to teach them the knowledge of God!" Then the queen blessed and praised Solomon's God, and Solomon gave her everything she wished, and she and her servants returned to their own country. And did the good queen forget all the wise and holy things she had learned at Jerusalem; or did she try to teach her people at home what Solomon had taught her?

The Bible tells us no more about her; but we may hope that she did not forget Solomon's instructions; and that she, and many of her people began to serve the true God.

CXXXIX.

THE VANITY OF THE WORLD.



SOLOMON was now growing an old man. Did he still love and serve God more and more, like good old Samuel and David?

No; we read very sad things about Solomon's old age. He turned away from the true God, who had kept and blessed him all his life, and began to worship the idols which his wicked wives worshipped. Why was this? How could this good and wise king become so wicked and so foolish? Because he was, like ourselves, weak and sinful. All his strength and goodness came from God; and when Solomon forgot to pray for help, then God's Holy Spirit went away from him; and Satan, and his own wicked heart, soon taught him to sin.

What made him forget God? Perhaps he grew proud of his riches, and power, and possessions, and wisdom, and loved them so much, and thought about them so much, that he could not love and think about God. He loved the world more and more, and God less and less; and, at last, he forsook God altogether, and God forsook him. How sad it is to love the world, and to forget God, and to lose His blessing! Was Solomon happy now? No; he had no true peace, no comfort from all his worldly things. He tried them all. He walked about

in his beautiful gardens and vineyards; he gathered and ate the fruit, and smelled the sweet flowers; but soon he grew tired of them, and threw them all away. Then he went into his fine houses, and looked at his silver and gold, and called his servants to play and sing to him. He was pleased for a little time, but soon he was weary of this too. Then he remembered his wisdom, and went to his books and studies, and he felt pleased to think how much he knew. But he could not read long; he grew tired, and put away his books, and said, "All is vanity, and sorrow, and vexation of spirit." Solomon ate and drank, but he did not care for any thing; all was soon gone, and then he was unhappy, and discontented again. How unhappy he was now with all his riches, and all his wisdom! He went about from place to place, crying, "Vanity! vanity! all is vanity and vexation of spirit." And why was this? Because God's blessing was not upon Solomon now; he had not God's smile to make him happy in all he did: he was not trying to serve God, he was trying only to please himself. He had everything the world could give him, but he found all to be vanity.

Only God can give us true happiness. Worldly things soon pass away; they cannot give us real joy.

But if our hearts are set on heavenly things, then we shall have true peace, and happiness which will last for ever. Jesus Christ says to His peo-

ple, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." *John* xiv. 27.

CXL

THE REBELLION OF THE TEN TRIBES.

DID Solomon never have true peace and happiness again? Did he never repent and turn to God, and ask for forgiveness? We may hope he did. God loved Solomon, and he would not let him die in his wickedness, and perish for ever. When Solomon found that worldly things could not comfort him, we may hope that he turned again to God, and asked for pardon; and that God forgave him all his sin, and loved, and blessed, and comforted him once more. And then Solomon felt what ought to be our great business in this world, and he said, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." *Eccles.* xii. 13.

But God punished Solomon with troubles to the end of his life. What were these troubles? There was a man in Israel named Jeroboam. He was very industrious, and Solomon gave him business to do for him in the kingdom. One day, when Jeroboam was in the field, Ahijah, the prophet, came to him with a wonderful message from God. Ahijah had on a new garment; and he took it, and rent it into twelve pieces, and gave ten to Jeroboam. Then the prophet said, "These twelve pieces are like the twelve tribes of Israel. I have given

thee ten pieces, because soon God will take away ten tribes from Solomon, and give them unto thee. God will punish Solomon and Israel, because they have forsaken Him, and worshipped new gods: but he will not take away all the kingdom from David's children; He will still give to them the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. And if, when thou art king, thou wilt obey and serve God, He will bless thee, and give thy kingdom to thy sons after thee." Jeroboam was not to be king till after Solomon's death: but Solomon was afraid when he heard what Ahijah had said, and tried to kill Jeroboam. But Solomon could not prevent what God had promised; Jeroboam escaped to Egypt, and there he stayed in safety till Solomon died.

Solomon reigned forty years. His riches and power could not save him from death. All must die. Rich and poor, kings and queens, and their people too—all must go down to the grave. "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." *Eccles.* xii. 7.

After the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam went to Shechem, to be made king. Jeroboam heard of this, and came from Egypt, and called all Israel to him. Then Jeroboam and the people of Israel

sent a very disrespectful message to Rehoboam, and said, "Thy father Solomon was unkind to us, and made hard laws which we did not like. Do thou be kind, and make easy laws, and then we will serve and obey thee." When Rehoboam heard this message, he asked the old men, who had been his father's friends, to give him advice. The old men said, "Speak gently to the people, and then they will be thy servants, and love and obey thee." But Rehoboam did not attend to this good advice of the old men. He called his own friends, foolish self-willed young men, and he asked them, "What shall I do?" The young men said, "Speak harshly to the people, and tell them that the laws shall be more strict now

than they were in Solomon's time." Rehoboam attended to this foolish advice, and called Jeroboam, and all Israel, and said, "My father's laws were strict, but I will make them more strict. He punished you a little, I will punish you very much." This answer made Jeroboam and the people very angry, and they said, "We will not obey Rehoboam." So the people of Israel made Jeroboam their king, and he reigned over ten tribes; but Judah and Benjamin followed Rehoboam.

But why did God take away ten tribes from Rehoboam? Because of Solomon's sin. God had not forgotten the message He sent to Jeroboam by Ahijah. All God says, He remembers, and does; and He must always punish sin.

CXLI.

REHOBAM AND JEROBOAM.



HERE were two kings in the land of Canaan now, Rehoboam and Jeroboam, and they were always fighting against one another. Were they good kings? No, both were very wicked. Rehoboam was not like his father, but foolish and self-willed; and his people were wicked too, and, therefore, God's blessing was not upon them. An enemy came to fight against them, Shishak king of Egypt, and he took many of their cities, and came to Jerusalem. Rehoboam and his people felt very much frightened when they saw Shishak coming with all his soldiers, and chariots, and horses. They had cause

to fear; for God sent a very sad message to them by a prophet, to tell them how angry He was:—"Thus saith the Lord, ye have forsaken me, and now I have given you up to the power of your enemies." Rehoboam and his people were all very sorry to hear this. What could they do? They did what was best—they humbled themselves before God. When we sin and make God angry, we ought to ask humbly for pardon. God is always willing to hear prayer. He heard the prayer of Rehoboam and his people, and said, "I will not destroy Rehoboam, because he is humble and sorry for his sin." So Jerusalem was spared, and Shishak went

away; but he took with him many beautiful things which Solomon had put in the temple of the Lord.

Was Rehoboam good now? Did he try to serve the Lord? No, Rehoboam's goodness quickly passed away. He was humble and sorry for a little time; but soon he forgot God again, and thought only about his sins and his pleasures. His heart was not new; he did not truly wish to serve God. This was displeasing to God. He does not like us partly to love Him, and partly to love the world. He does not want us sometimes to serve Him, and sometimes to serve Satan. God wishes all our hearts to be given to Him every day we live.

Jeroboam was very wicked too. He taught the people to worship images, golden calves, which he put in Bethel and Dan. He would not let his people go to Jerusalem, to worship God in the right way there; but he chose to worship in his own way, and to make priests of the people who were not Levites. This was disobedience to the command of God; for he had said that the Levites should be priests, and they alone.

One day, Jeroboam was standing by his altar at Bethel, burning incense. A prophet of God came from Judah to Bethel, and went to

the altar, and cried, "O altar, altar thus saith the Lord: there shall be born a king in Judah, named Josiah, and upon thee shall he offer the priests that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." Then the altar was rent, and the ashes poured out, as a sign to show Jeroboam that the prophecy came from God. Jeroboam was angry with the prophet, for he did not like to hear that his altar should be destroyed; and he put out his hand, to lay hold of the man of God. But the wicked king had no power to hurt God's prophet. The hand of Jeroboam dried up directly, so that he had no strength to move it. God smote Jeroboam, to punish him for his wickedness in trying to hurt His servant.

The king was frightened when he looked at his withered hand, and found he had no power to use it. He said humbly to the prophet, "Ask God to forgive me, and to make my hand well again." Was the prophet willing to be kind to his enemy? Yes, he did not wish to be revengeful; he knew he ought to love and pray for his enemies. So the prophet prayed, and God mercifully heard his prayer, and made Jeroboam's hand strong and well again.

CXLII.

THE DISOBEDIENT PROPHET.



AS Jeroboam thankful to the prophet who prayed God to make his hand well again? Yes, Jeroboam said to him, "Come home with me, and rest thyself, and eat bread at my house, and I will give thee money." But the prophet said, "No, I must not go back with thee. God commanded me not to eat nor drink in this place, but to go away directly by another road." So the prophet went away, and Jeroboam returned to his house alone.

There was an old man who lived at Bethel, who was a prophet too, but he was not a good man. When his sons came home that day, they told him the wonderful story of the prophet who came from Judah, and prophesied about Jeroboam's altar: and of the king's hand withering when he tried to lay hold of the man of God; and how it was cured when the prophet prayed to God. The old man wondered very much to hear these things, and said, "I should like to see this prophet, and talk to him; where is he gone?" The sons showed their father the road the prophet had taken; and then the old man saddled his ass, and rode after him, to seek him. Did he find him? Yes, at last he saw the prophet sitting under an oak tree. Then the old man went to him, and asked, "Art thou the prophet, who came from Judah?" He said, "Yes, I am." Then the old man said, "Come home with

me, and eat bread." But the prophet answered, "No, I must not; God commanded me to eat no bread and drink no water here, and I can not disobey Him." But the old man said, "I am a prophet too; and an angel appeared to me, and told me to go to thee, and bring thee home, and give thee bread to eat, and water to drink."

Was this the truth? No, but the prophet did not know it was a lie; he believed all the old man said, and went home with him to his house. Was this right? No, it was disobedience to God's command. The prophet ought to have asked God, "Is it true what this man tells me? Shall I go with him?" But the prophet believed the old man more than he believed God; and when he was tempted to do wrong, he did not ask help from God, and therefore, he began to sin against Him.

There are now many wicked people who try to tempt us to sin; and our own sinful hearts too often make us wish to do wrong, and not right. We all love sin better than we love holiness, if God's Spirit is not in us to teach us aright. What must we do when we are tempted? We must pray God to help us to resist sin; we must ask Him to keep us in the right way; and pray every day we live, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" *Matt. vi. 13.*

The old man and the prophet went home together, and sat down to eat and drink. And now pun-

ishment came upon the disobedient prophet. God had seen all he did. His eye is always upon us. Wherever we go, whatever we do, He knows all. When we obey and serve Him, and trust in Him to guide us in all our ways, then His blessing follows us, and we are safe wherever we go. But if we are disobedient to Him, and forget or rebel against His commands, then we sin against Him, and His frown is upon us, and not His smile.

God sent a message to the old man, while they were all sitting at table. It was a very sad message. The old man cried to the prophet, "Thus saith the Lord; because thou hast disobeyed the command of God, thou shalt not go to thy home again; but thou shalt die by the way, and thy body shall not be buried in thy father's tomb." The poor prophet saw now how dangerous it is to disobey God.

When they had finished eating, the prophet saddled his ass, and went away. He looked up, and saw a lion in the road coming to meet

him. God sent that lion: it came to punish the disobedient prophet; and it rushed upon him and killed him in a moment. But the lion did not hurt the ass, nor devour the dead body of the man.

The people who passed by, soon came and told the sad story to the old prophet. He knew why the man of God was slain, and he felt very sorry, and went directly to the place where the lion had killed him. What did he see there? The poor prophet's dead body lying on the road, and the lion and the ass standing by it. The old man took up the dead body, and laid it on his ass, and carried it home. Then he put it in his own tomb, and mourned over it, and cried, "Alas! my brother."

He said to his sons, "When I die, bury me by the man of God. Lay my bones by his bones. I know that what he prophesied about the altar of Bethel shall all be found true." The old prophet believed the word of God now.

CXLIII.

JEROBOAM'S SON.

DID Jeroboam repent, and forsake his wicked idolatries? No, he went on in his sins; he grew worse and worse every day. And now God sent sorrow into the family of Jeroboam. His little boy became very ill. Sickness and death are sad things. It makes us very unhappy to look at those we love, and to see them in pain and suffering. But who sends pain, and sickness, and sorrow? God sends them all: sometimes he sends trouble, in anger, to punish sinners for their wickedness; sometimes He sends it in kindness, to His own people, to teach them to love Him more, and to seek comfort in Him, and not in a vain and foolish world. When we are in sorrow and sickness, we should tell God all our trouble, and ask Him to be our friend and comforter; and He will hear us. He says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." *Psalm* l. 15.

Had Jeroboam any to comfort him? God was not his friend; he did not go to Him in his trouble; but Jeroboam remembered the prophet Ahijah, who had told him, many years before, that he should be king of Israel; and Jeroboam said to his wife, "Go to the prophet Ahijah, we will ask him about the child. He will know whether our poor little boy will live or die." So Jeroboam's wife took a present with her, and went to Shiloh, where the prophet lived. Ahijah was an old man now; and his eyes were be-

come dim, so that he could not see. But God told him who was coming, and gave him a message for Jeroboam and his wife. Jeroboam's wife disguised herself, because she did not wish to be known; but Ahijah heard her coming to the door, and he cried out, "Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam. Do not disguise thyself; I know who thou art, and I have a fearful message to tell thee from God. Go home to Jeroboam, and say, Thus saith the Lord; I made thee king over my people Israel; I took away ten tribes from Rehoboam, and gave them to thee. But thou hast been rebellious and ungrateful; thou hast disobeyed my commands; thou hast forsaken me, and served new gods, and taught the people to be idolatrous too. Now, therefore, I will punish thy sin. I will send evil upon the family of Jeroboam. They shall die by the sword, and not be buried. The dogs shall eat their flesh in the city, and the birds shall eat their dead bodies in the field. The child of Jeroboam, who is now ill, shall die. He only shall die in peace, and be buried; and all the people shall mourn for him, because he alone loves God, and tries to serve Him, in the family of Jeroboam." Then Ahijah said to Jeroboam's wife, "Go home now. Thy child shall not recover. When thy feet come to the door of the house he shall die." The wicked queen arose, and went home full of sorrow; and when she came to her house, she asked, "Is the child bet-

ter?" No, the poor little boy was just dead.

God, in kindness to the child, made him die. His wicked parents had not taught him to know the Lord; but the Holy Spirit had taught him, and, therefore, he was ready to die.

Are you, like this little boy, ready to die? Perhaps you may die very soon; for God often calls the young away; they do not always live to grow up to be men and women.

Children, therefore, ought to be ready for death; they should pray for new hearts, and choose God for their father and their friend *now*. And then, when called to die, they will be glad, as Jeroboam's little son was; and when their parents and friends mourn over their graves, it will comfort those parents and friends to think that their dear children are gone to a world of glory, to be happy there for ever.

CXLIV.

KING ASA.

JEROBOAM did not repent after his son's death; he was wicked all his life long. Rehoboam was dead now, and Abijah was king of Judah. He and Jeroboam fought against one another. Abijah was not a good man; but when he saw the army of Jeroboam coming, he behaved very bravely and very rightly. He stood upon a mountain, and called to Jeroboam, and to all Israel, and told them of their great sins and idolatries, in making and serving the golden calves. Abijah said, "The Lord is our captain, He will fight for us, and help us to conquer you." And who conquered? Judah conquered that day, because they trusted in God for safety. It was not Judah's own power that gave them the victory; but God fought for them, and smote wicked Jeroboam and his army. Jeroboam did not live long after; the Lord struck him and he died. Abijah died before him. The

quarrels of these two kings were ended then; their bodies crumbled into dust in the grave; and their souls went to appear before God; but we cannot hope that, like good King David and King Solomon, they were taken to that happy world where only holy people go.

We now come again to the history of a very good king. His name was Asa; he was king of Judah, and son of Abijah. When Asa began to reign, he found his people very ignorant of God. They had learnt to be idolators; to worship images and new gods, and not their own God, the true God, who made all things. But when Asa was king, he knew it was his duty to teach his people the right way. So he threw down all the idol-altars, and the images, and commanded Judah to seek the Lord.

Did God bless Asa? Yes, and He gave rest and quietness to Judah. All went on well; and Asa built many new cities, and walls, and towers; and he and his people became rich,

and strong, and happy. Why? Asa told the people—"Because we have sought the Lord our God."

Was there rest in Judah all the years that Asa reigned? No: all countries, and people, every where, must have trouble sometimes; and Asa had his troubles. Enemies came to fight against him. They were very, very many, and they came with chariots and horses, and made ready for battle. Was Asa frightened? Perhaps he was at first; but he knew where to find help. Did he trust in his soldiers, and his armor, and his strong cities? No, Asa knew that all these things could not help him. There was no power in them; but the good king went to God, and asked for His help. He prayed, and said, "Lord we trust in Thee to help us; we have no power in ourselves, but we know that Thou wilt hear us, and fight our enemies for us, and then we shall have the victory. Thou art our God; in thy name we go to fight against this army of our enemies." Then Asa and his people felt safe and happy, because they knew that God would hear and answer their prayer. And so He did. He smote their enemies, and gave Asa and his people the victory. God is ready to hear His people's prayers now. We all have many troubles, and many enemies. Sometimes we have pain, and sorrow, and sickness: always we have to fight against sin, and against Satan. What must we do when we are in trouble? We must do as Asa did; we must go to God for comfort, and help, and strength. Often it is very hard to fight against our enemies. Our own wicked hearts, and sinful tempers, and Satan's temptations, give us

trouble every day. But if we ask God, He will hear us. He will fight for us, as He fought for Asa. He will conquer our evil passions, and subdue our iniquities, and give us the victory. Then we shall be "more than conquerors," not by our own strength, and wisdom, and goodness; but by Him who loves us, and keeps us, and fights for us, if we put our trust in Him alone.

God now gave peace to Judah for many years. He sent a prophet to Asa to encourage him to go on, and serve the Lord. This prophet brought a message from God; he said, "If you will still love and serve the Lord, then He promises to be with you, and to bless you in all you do; but if you forsake Him He will forsake you. Now, be strong, and put your trust in God, and all shall be well with you." Asa and his people attended to what the prophet said. They met at Jerusalem, and there they offered sacrifices, and made a covenant with God. They promised to seek him with all their hearts and souls. That was a joyful day in Jerusalem. The people shouted, and sang praises to God, and prayed to Him, and asked His help and blessing. Did God hear them? Yes: God was pleased to hear His people's prayers, and praises, and promises. He sent His Holy Spirit among them, and gave them His blessing, and made them all happy and peaceful around them.

Asa was growing an old man. He had had many happy and peaceful years, but now trouble came again. The king of Israel and his army fought against him. Did Asa remember the kindness of God in past times? Did he go to him again for safety? No, Asa forgot to do

this; he did not now trust in God, but he went to the King of Syria, and asked help from him. The king of Syria was very willing to help Asa. He sent captains and soldiers to fight for him, and soon the Israelites were conquered. But Asa had displeased God, because he had trusted more in the king of Syria than he had trusted in the Lord; and therefore a prophet was sent to Asa, to tell him how angry God was. Asa had sinned, and God must punish him. The prophet said, "Thou hast done foolishly. Thou hast trusted in the king of Syria, and not in God. Now thou shalt have wars, and battles, and fighting in thy kingdom, all the rest of thy life." This was sad news for Asa. He had been foolish and wicked too. When we are in trouble, God alone can give us true help and comfort. How foolish and ungrateful we are when we forget this!

The rest of Asa's life was not happy, as it had been before. When people forget and disobey God, they cannot be happy. Asa was not humbled when he heard God's message to him. He did not, like David, confess his sin directly, and ask for forgiveness. No, Asa was very angry with the prophet who told him what God said. This was still more wrong in Asa. The prophet spoke as God commanded, and Asa should have attended humbly to the message he brought, and prayed to be enabled to do better in future. Asa, in his anger, shut up the faithful prophet in a prison, where he could speak to him no more. But God's message was true, and Asa suffered from wars all the rest of his life, while the poor prophet

was alone and sorrowful in his prison.

When Asa was an old man, God sent a new punishment upon him; for God must always punish His people when they sin against Him, to make them repent, and return to Him. Asa was troubled with a disease in his feet. It gave him much pain and suffering; he could not walk about now, as he used to do. Did he humble himself before God? No, the Bible tells us that, "in his disease, he sought not unto the Lord, but unto the physicians." He wished to be well, and he called all his wise doctors, and asked them to take away his pain, and make him strong again. But Asa forgot who sent the disease, and who alone could take it away.

When we are sick we should be patient in all our pain, and submit humbly to God's will. It is not wrong to send to physicians when we are ill. We ought to be very thankful for kind and wise friends who will visit us in our sickness, and try to comfort us, and make us well; and we ought to attend to what they say, and thank them for their advice. But it is very wrong to trust more to physicians than to God. And this was what Asa did. Physicians and medicine can do us no good without the blessing of God. He alone can take away our pain, and make us well. Then, when we are sick, let us trust all to Him. He is the good physician, the best friend we can have. He can cure our soul as well as our body. He will take away our sin, the worst of all diseases, if we ask Him to do so, for his dear Son's sake; and then we need not be afraid of bodily pain and sickness.

CXLV.

THE WICKED KINGS OF ISRAEL.



AFTER wicked Jeroboam's death, Nadab reigned over the ten tribes. Nadab was the son of Jeroboam; and he was like his wicked father, not like his little brother, who was now safe and happy in Heaven, happier than Nadab on his father's throne. This wicked king did not reign long. After two years, a man named Baasha conspired against him, and killed him, and made himself king of Israel. When Baasha was king, the first thing he did was to destroy all Jeroboam's family. He did not let one of them escape. Baasha was a very wicked, and a very cruel man. It was wrong in him to murder his king, and to put all the king's family to death. But now what God had said to Jeroboam's wife by the prophet Ahijah, all came true. He never forgets what he says.

Baasha made war with Asa, king of Judah. It was then that Asa displeased God, by trusting in the king of Syria for help. Baasha worshipped idols, like Jeroboam and Nadab. He sinned like them, and God said he should be punished like them too. After Baasha died, his son Elah was king. He was as wicked as his father; and now God sent punishment upon him, as He said. Zimri, captain of Elah's chariots, conspired against his master, and killed him, while he was eating and drinking, and making merry with his wicked friends.

Zimri did not reign long. There was another captain in Israel, as

ambitious, and selfish, and wicked, as he. His name was Omri. The people of Israel liked Omri, and chose him for their king; and he and his soldiers went to Tirzah, where Zimri lived, and besieged the city. Zimri was frightened when he saw Omri coming against him. All wicked people are troubled and fearful in the time of danger, because they have then no safety, no hope; they know that God is their enemy, and not their friend. They cannot trust in Him for deliverance here, and they have no hope of being saved when they die. Wicked people are very unhappy people; but those who have God for their friend, may feel safe and comfortable in all their dangers.

What did Zimri do? He knew he could not escape: he felt he must die; his possessions and riches could not save him. In despair, he went into his palace, and set it on fire; so the beautiful palace was burnt, and the wicked king perished in the flames.

Omri was king now. At first he lived in Tirzah; but after a few years, he built a new city, and named it Samaria; and then Samaria was the capital of the kingdom of Israel, and not Tirzah. Omri was a very wicked king. He was worse than Jeroboam, or Nadab, or Baasha, or Elah, or Zimri. He sinned himself, and taught his people to sin too. They all became idolators; worshipping false gods, and not the true God, who had been their friend so often in times past.

Canaan was not now a happy country, as it had been when the king and the people loved and served God together,—when good king David reigned. We have no idol Baal, but many of us have idols in our hearts.

If we love the world, or sin, or self, better than we love God, then we serve idols like wicked Israel. Saint John says to us all, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John v. 21.

CXLVI

THE BROOK CHERITH.



AHAB was king after Omri's death. He was more wicked than any of the kings who reigned before him in Israel. His wife's name was Jezebel, and she encouraged her husband in his sins and idolatries. They both worshipped Baal, and taught their people to worship him too.

Were all the Israelites idolators now? Was there none to teach them about God? Were there no holy prophets in Israel still? There were yet a few faithful servants of God; and a holy prophet was living in the country, who boldly preached the truth to the people of Israel. This prophet was Elijah. The Bible tells us many wonderful and beautiful stories about him.

God told Elijah to go to king Ahab, and say, that He would send no rain, and no dew, upon the land of Israel for a long time. Israel had forgotten their kind and merciful God who gave them all their good things. They did not thank Him for His blessings; they did not ask Him for the food they needed: they were worshipping Baal, not God; and, therefore, God punished His ungrateful people by taking away their blessings. He taught

them, in this way, that He alone could give them their good things, and that he could take all away too, if He pleased.

This was a sad time for Israel. No rain fell to water the ground; so the grass dried up, and then there was no food for the poor animals; and no corn, nor fruits, for the people to eat. A famine is a dreadful thing.

But where was Elijah now? God took care of him; He told him where to go, and how he should be fed. There was a little brook of water near Jordan, named Cherith, and God told Elijah to go and hide himself there. Why must he hide himself? Because Elijah had enemies who were seeking to kill him. Ahab and Jezebel hated him, because he told them the truth, and spoke to them about their sins, and warned them of God's anger. It was right of Elijah to tell them all this; but wicked people love their sins, and do not like to be reproved for them. Ahab and Jezebel hated all God's holy prophets, and sought for them to put them to death: but Elijah was safely kept by God at the brook Cherith.

What did he eat there? There was no corn, nor fruit; yet he had

plenty every day. Who gave him his daily food? God sent it to him in a very wonderful way. Not by a friend, nor a prophet, nor a servant, nor an angel. God sent it to him every day by ravens. Every morning the ravens came to Elijah. One carried flesh in its beak; another carried bread. The ravens did not eat the food themselves. They brought it to Elijah; and he took it from them, and then they flew away; and every evening the ravens came again, and brought more bread and flesh to Elijah; and when he was thirsty, he drank the water of the brook. He was alone; only God was with him: but Elijah was happy. He never felt afraid; for he knew God was his friend, and he could trust Him for all things. There he sat, thinking about holy things; about God, and Christ, and Heaven, and praying and singing praises alone in the wilderness. When the birds brought his daily food, he ate it, and was thankful; and he knew that God would send

him more on the morrow, if it pleased Him. And then Elijah could lie down in peace and comfort, and none could make him afraid. How pleasant it is to be contented like Elijah, and to trust God for all things as he did! If Elijah's God is our God, we need never feel sorrowful, nor discontented, nor lonely, nor afraid.

But what made the ravens so kind to Elijah? God made them so. He has power over the instincts of animals; He can make all things do as He pleases. He could make Balaam's ass speak; He could make the lion, which killed the disobedient prophet, stand quietly without touching the dead body; and now He could make the wild ravens kind and friendly to Elijah. How powerful God is, and how kind He is to His own servants? Let us trust this good and wonderful God at all times; for He will give us every thing we really need, if we trust in Him.

 CXLVII.

THE WIDOW OF ZAREPHATH.



AFTER a time, the brook Cherith dried up; and Elijah had no more water to drink. What must he do? Did God let him stay there and die of thirst? No, his kind God did not forget him. He knew all Elijah's wants; and when the brook was dry, He had a new home for Elijah, and new friends to take care of him. God spoke to the prophet again, and told him to

go to Zarephath, and dwell there. Was there any kind friend for Elijah at Zarephath? Yes; God said, "I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee."

Elijah obeyed God directly. He arose, and went to Zarephath. It was a long way off; and when he came to the gate of the city, he felt tired, and faint, and hungry. He saw there a poor woman gathering sticks. She was pale and feeble;

for she had suffered much in the famine, and she looked as if she must soon die. Was this the woman whom God had chosen to take care of Elijah? Yes; she was very poor; but God could help her to find food for herself, and for Elijah also. The good prophet knew she was the right person, and he knew how poor she was; but he had great faith in God; he knew that God, who made the ravens bring him food, could help this poor widow to feed him too. So Elijah called to the woman, and said, "Bring me a little water, that I may drink." The poor widow was very kind; she was willing to give what she could; and she went directly to fetch the water. But Elijah called again, and said, "Bring me, I pray thee, a little bread in thine hand." Then the poor woman looked very sad, and said, "I have no bread; it is all gone. I have only a little meal, and a little oil; and now I am gathering two sticks; and I shall go and dress it for myself and my son, and we shall eat it, and then we must die." This was sad indeed; but Elijah had a message for the poor widow, to comfort her in her sorrow. He said, "Fear not; go and make first a little cake for me; and afterwards make for thee and thy son. The Lord God of Israel says, the barrel of meal shall not waste, nor the cruse of oil fail, till the Lord send rain upon the ground." Did the woman believe? Yes, she had faith in God; she believed that he had power to do this miracle, and she went and obeyed Elijah. She first made a little cake for the prophet, and then she made for herself and her child. Were the

meal and oil all gone then? No, there was as much as there was before she made the cakes. So she put away the meal and the oil, and next day she dressed them again. Were they gone then? No, all was the same as before. God added to the meal and the oil, every day, and made them increase; and the poor woman, and Elijah, and the child, ate in comfort and plenty many days.

After a time a new sorrow came into the poor woman's little family. They had lived happily together a long while; now God was pleased to send them trouble again. The widow's little boy fell sick and died. The poor mother was very sorry to lose her child. She went to Elijah, and told all her trouble to him. Elijah was sorry too; for he loved the little boy. Elijah himself had no power to raise the child, but he knew that God could if he pleased; so he took the dead boy out of the mother's arms, and carried him into his own room, and laid him upon the bed. Then Elijah threw himself upon the child, and prayed to God, and said, "O Lord, let this child live again." And did God hear the prayer? Yes, "The Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." Then Elijah took the little boy, and brought him to his mother, and said, "See, thy son liveth." The widow was happy now, and thankful to God who raised her child. She knew it was God's power that made her son alive again, and she believed God, and the words that His prophet spoke.

CXLVIII.

BAAL'S PROPHETS.



ANY days passed away; and then God told Elijah, that very soon he would send rain on the earth; and He commanded him to go and tell this to Ahab. Was Elijah afraid to go to the wicked king? No; the prophet obeyed God without fear, for he knew God could keep him safely if He pleased.

There was a dreadful famine at this time in Samaria, where Ahab lived. All the people and animals were dying for want of food. The king called Obadiah, his servant, and said, "Go now, and seek for grass by the brooks and fountains; perhaps there may be a little to save our poor horses and mules alive." So Obadiah left Samaria, and went through the land, to seek for grass. Obadiah was a good man; he was not like his wicked master. Obadiah served the Lord. When he was very young, he began to love God; and he prayed to be kept from all the wicked idolatry he saw in Ahab's house. God heard the prayer of Obadiah. He taught him to do right, and to serve and honor Him. When Ahab and Jezebel tried to kill all God's holy prophets, Obadiah took those good men, and hid them in a cave, and fed them with bread and water, and kept them safely from the cruel king. Obadiah often felt very unhappy when he saw how wicked the king and queen were; it was sad for him to live in such a family; but Obadiah had another master and king

in Heaven, who helped him in all his troubles and difficulties. If we are, at any time, with wicked people, we should try to be like holy Obadiah: and ask God, as he did, to help us to do right, and to honor Him in all things.

Obadiah went alone to obey Ahab's command, but he trusted in God, and God soon comforted him. Obadiah saw a man coming to meet him. When the man came near, Obadiah looked at him, and remembered him directly. Who was it? It was Elijah the prophet; and when Obadiah saw him, he was very glad, and fell down respectfully before him, and said, "Art thou my lord Elijah?" He told him what he had done to the good men whom Jezebel tried to kill; and how much he loved the God whom Elijah loved. Then the prophet desired Obadiah to go to Ahab, and say that Elijah was come. Obadiah was afraid at first. He thought that perhaps Elijah would go away again, and then Ahab might be very angry, and kill him. But Elijah said, "Do not fear, I will not go away; I will show myself to Ahab to-day." So Obadiah went, and told the king, and Ahab came to meet Elijah. Ahab hated Elijah very much; and when he saw him, he said, "Art thou the man that troubles Israel?" But Elijah answered, "I do not trouble Israel; I teach the people what is right; but thou troublest the people, because thou hast disobeyed God's com-

mands, and hast served Baal. Now send, and gather together the prophets of Baal, 450 of them; let them all come to mount Carmel." Ahab did as Elijah said; and all the wicked prophets came to Carmel; Elijah was there too, and very many of the people of Israel. Then Elijah spoke to the people, and said, "Choose to-day whom you wish to serve. If Baal is the true God, obey Baal; but if not, obey God, the God of Israel." The people made no answer. Then Elijah said, "We will try now, and see who is the true God. Let Baal's prophets build an altar, and offer a bullock in sacrifice, and put no fire under. Then I, the Lord's prophet, will build an altar, and offer a bullock in sacrifice, and put no fire under. You shall pray to Baal, and I will pray to the Lord; and the God who sends down fire on the sacrifice, he shall be the true God." All the people said, "Yes, let us try." So Baal's prophets built the altar, and put a bullock upon it, and prayed Baal to send fire upon the sacrifice. But Baal could not hear. He was but an idol, without power to answer prayer. Then the prophets cried louder, and said, "O Baal, hear us." But still there was no voice, no answer. Then the foolish prophets cried again, and cut themselves with knives, till they were all covered with blood. They thought this might make Baal attend to them. But no; no fire came, no answer, no voice. When it was evening,

and they were all tired of waiting so long, Elijah called them, and said, "Come to me." Then he built up the altar of God, and took another bullock, and put it upon the altar, and poured water upon it, and prayed to the Lord, the true God. He asked God to teach the people that He alone had power to hear prayer, and to send fire from Heaven. And did God hear? Yes, the fire fell from Heaven, when Elijah prayed; it burnt the sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and dried up the water upon the altar; and all the people saw it, and cried, "The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God." Then Elijah commanded that all the wicked prophets should be taken; and he brought them to the brook Kishon, and killed them there. It was sad to put all these wicked men to death; but it was God's command. They deserved to die, for they had taught Israel to sin. The people now saw who was the true, the only God.

There are many people now, in distant countries, who worship idols such as Baal. They do not know the true God, for they have no Bible to teach them about Him. Let us be thankful that we know the true God, the God of Elijah, who will always hear and answer His people's prayers; and let us ask God to send missionaries and Bibles to the poor ignorant heathen, to teach them to know Him too.

CXLIX.

ELIJAH IN THE WILDERNESS.



AND now Elijah spoke to Ahab, and told him, that soon God would send rain upon the land. Ahab was glad to hear this, and went away to eat and drink; but Elijah went to the top of Carmel to pray. Then the prophet called his servant and said, "Go to the sea, and look." The servant went; but he came back soon, and said to his master, "I see nothing." Then Elijah told him to go again seven times. Why was the servant to go and look towards the sea? Because Elijah wanted to see if the black clouds were coming, and the wind, and the rain. He knew that soon the rain would fall, for God had promised it; and he waited patiently, praying in faith, till the right time came. God does not always answer prayers directly. Sometimes He waits a long while before He answers them. Does not God attend to our prayers? Yes; but He knows what is right for us, better than we can know; and He often sees it best that we should wait for what we ask. But we must not be tired of praying. We must do as Elijah did; he prayed and waited a long time; and at last, God answered his prayer, and gave him what he asked.

The servant came back, and said, "I see a little cloud, like a man's hand, coming out of the sea." Then Elijah knew that the rain was coming, and he sent his servant to tell Ahab. The little cloud grew larger and larger, and the sky be-

came very black, and the wind blew, and then the rain began to fall very heavily. The poor people, and the thirsty animals were very glad of the rain. It would soon make the grass and the corn spring up, and then there would be food for them again. How kind God is to His people to give them rain and sunshine, to make the corn, and herba, and grass, grow out of the ground!

Where did Elijah go now? He ran before Ahab to Jezreel. But when Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done to Baal's prophets, she was very angry. She loved Baal and the wicked prophets; but she hated God and His holy prophets, and she said, "I will kill Elijah: to-morrow he shall be dead, as my prophets of Baal are." When Elijah heard this, he arose, and escaped to Beersheba, and went alone into the wilderness, and sat down under a tree. Elijah was very unhappy. He had many enemies seeking to kill him; many of his friends were dead; cruel Jezebel had slain them; and the people were very wicked; they served Baal and not God. All this made Elijah feel sad; and he thought of heaven, that happy place where there are no cruel enemies and no wicked people; and he wished to be there, and cried, "O Lord, take away my life."

Was this right? No; Elijah forgot then that God could comfort him, and take care of him still. There was much for Elijah to do; it was not the will of God that he should die yet; and, therefore, he

was to wait patiently. But God loved and pitied His poor servant, and sent an angel to comfort him. Elijah soon fell asleep under the tree, for he was very tired and sorrowful; and as he slept, an angel came to him and touched him, and said, "Arise, and eat." Elijah looked up, and what did he see? There was a cake baked on the coals, ready for him to eat, and a cruse of water at his head. Who had brought them? God had sent them; God, who before had sent the ravens to feed Elijah by the brook Cherith. How kind God was to His prophet! Elijah ate and drank, and lay down, and slept again. Soon the angel touched him the second time, and said, "Arise, and eat." And Elijah obeyed; and now he felt strong, and able to do all that God gave him to do. He went to Horeb, and was there forty days and forty nights. He ate nothing all that time, but

he did not want food, for God kept him without it. When Moses was in the mountain, he lived forty days without food too. God can preserve His people very wonderfully, if he so please.

How pleasant it was for Elijah to have God's holy angels so near him when he slept! God takes care of all His people, as He took care of Elijah. When they are asleep, and cannot take care of themselves, He is with them. His eye never sleeps. He can see in the dark night, when they are alone, and have no friend near them: and He sends His holy angels to guard them then. God's people may feel very safe and happy in the long dark night. If God please, they will sleep in peace and safety, and awake alive and well: if not, they will awake in a happier world—the holy angels will carry their souls safely to their home in Heaven.

CL

ELIJAH AT HOREB.

ELIJAH went into a cave at Horeb, and stayed there. He was still fearful and unhappy; but God had work for him to do, and he was not to be longer idle. God's people love to pray, and to think of him in secret. They like to be far away from the wicked world, and from all their enemies, and their troubles; but they must be willing to be active and busy too, if God commands them.

God spoke to Elijah and said, "What doest thou here?" Then

Elijah said, "I have been very unhappy, because the people of Israel have forsaken Thee, and worship Baal. Many of Thy prophets are slain with the sword. I am left alone, and they seek me, to put me to death too." Then God told Elijah to go and stand upon the mountain before the Lord. Elijah obeyed; and while he stood there, the Lord Himself passed by. First there was a great wind. The wind tore the mountains, and broke the rocks to pieces; but God was not in the wind. Then there was an earth-

quake. The ground shook where Elijah stood, and he felt very much frightened; but God was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire. It burnt up all the trees and grass; it was a very fearful sight; but God was not in the fire. Then all was quiet. God had shown Elijah His great and wonderful power; now, He spoke to him in love. Elijah heard a voice, a kind, gentle voice; it was the voice of God. Elijah knew it, and he covered his face, and went and stood humbly before God, to hear what He would say. . Then the voice said again, "What doest thou here?" Elijah answered, "I have been very much troubled, because of the sin of the people of Israel. They have forsaken Thee, and killed Thy prophets, and thrown down Thy altars. I am left alone, and they seek my life, to take it away." Then God said, "Go now to Damascus. Anoint Hazael to be king of Syria; and anoint Jehu to be king of Israel. And I will raise up another prophet to serve me when thou art gone. His name is Elisha. Go and anoint him too. And do not be troubled about the people of Israel. There are many of them who still love and worship me; 7000 who have not bowed down to Baal." Then Elijah

was comforted. He had seen and felt God's power and God's love: and he knew he need not fear, if this powerful and gracious God was his friend.

Elijah went away from Horeb, and soon found Elisha the new prophet. Elisha was ploughing with his oxen; he was not thinking of the honor of being God's prophet. But Elisha loved God, and God knew his heart; and now he sent Elijah to call him. Enjah passed by, and cast his mantle on him. Elisha understood it, and ran to Elijah, and said, "I will go and kiss my father and mother, and then I will follow thee." Elijah said, "Go." So Elisha went home, and killed two oxen, and boiled the flesh, and gave food to the people, and they ate; and afterwards Elisha followed Elijah, and waited on him. Elisha was very glad to be with this good master. Elijah could teach him much about God and heavenly things, and Elisha loved to hear of these things, and was very attentive to all Elijah said. Elisha had now given up all for God. He had chosen Him for his friend: he was to be his minister all his life. This was a great honor and a great blessing for Elisha.

OLI

BEN-HADAD.

HERE was a king of Syria, named Ben-hadad, a very wicked man. He came with a great army to fight against Ahab, and besieged the city of Samaria; but God was not with the wicked Syrians; and he sent a prophet to Ahab, to tell him, that soon their great army should be destroyed. Ahab made his soldiers ready for the battle; and God helped the Israelites, and gave them the victory. The Syrians were conquered; it was God who gave Israel power to conquer them; but the Syrians would not believe this, for they knew nothing about the true God, the God of Israel. So they said, "The gods of the Israelites are the gods of the hills. They had power over us, because we fought upon the hills; but if we fight in the valleys, they cannot conquer us there. We shall then be stronger than they, and soon conquer them."

Next year the Syrians came again to fight against Israel, and made ready for the battle in the valley of Aphek. They thought they were sure of the victory, if they fought in the valleys. They came in great numbers; but the Israelites were very few. Did the Syrians conquer? No; God was angry with them for not believing in His power: and He said to Ahab, "I will give all this great army into thy hand." The Israelites soon conquered the Syrians; and thus God taught Ben-

hadad and his soldiers, that He is God everywhere.

God reigns over all the earth. The hills and the valleys are all alike to Him. We cannot hide from His eye; He sees what is done in every place, and rules over all things as he pleases. He could give power to Israel's little army, and He could take away power from the great army of Syria.

Ben-hadad escaped to Aphek, and hid himself there. He wanted now to make peace with Ahab, for he saw he could not conquer Israel; so he sent his servants with a very humble message, to beg Ahab to let him live. Ahab attended to what the messengers said; he sent for Ben-hadad, and spoke kindly to him, and made peace with him. Was this right? No: God did not wish Israel to be friendly with the wicked Syrians. It was wrong of Ahab to make peace with Ben-hadad, and he displeased God very much. Ahab was punished for what he had done. God told him, that he, and many of his people, should die in fighting with the king of Syria. Then Ahab went home to his house in Samaria, angry and displeased. Why was he displeased? Because he did not like God's message. Ahab very often made God angry; he had many times disobeyed Him, and brought punishment on himself. But Ahab was not humbled and sorry for his sins. He did not ask for forgiveness; he was sullen, and angry, and out

of temper. When God punishes us for our sins, what ought we to do? We ought to confess them, and repent of them, and pray for par-

don. Then God will forgive us "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy." *Proverbs xxviii. 13.*

CLII.

NABOTH'S VINEYARD..



HERE was a man named Naboth, who lived in Jezreel, and had a vineyard there, very near king Ahab's palace. It was a very pleasant garden; and the king often looked at it, and said, "I wish that garden were mine." Was this right? No; it was coveting what belonged to another, this is a great sin: the Bible says, "Thou shalt not covet." At last, he called Naboth, and said to him, "Give me thy vineyard. I like it very much, because it is near my house; and I want it for my garden. I will give thee another vineyard; or I will pay thee for it in money." But Naboth would not sell his vineyard, because it was the inheritance appointed for him by God; and he said to Ahab, "I cannot give my father's inheritance to thee." When the king heard this, he was angry: and when he went home, he sat sullenly without speaking; and when food was brought to him, he sent it away, and would not eat it. How foolish it is to be angry, and discontented, and ill-tempered, when we have not all we want!

When Jezebel saw how displeased Ahab was, she asked, "Why art thou so sad that thou eatest no bread?" Then Ahab said, "Because I asked Naboth to let me buy

his vineyard, and he will not part with it." Ahab was lying idly on his bed, for he was so angry he would do nothing; but now Jezebel said to him, "Arise, and eat, and be merry; and I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth." Wicked Jezebel had no right to do this; the vineyard did not belong to her; but she was not afraid of doing wrong, or of making God angry. So she wrote letters, and sealed them with Ahab's seal, and sent them to the nobles who lived at Jezreel. What did she say in the letters? She wrote, "Take Naboth, and bring him out before the people; and let two men accuse him of rebellion against God and the king; and then carry him away, and stone him, that he may die." This wicked command came to the nobles in Jezreel; and after they had read it, they went to Naboth's house, and brought him out before the people to be judged. Had Naboth done wrong? No; but the nobles sent for two wicked men who wrongfully accused him, and said, "Naboth has rebelled against God, and against the king." These wicked men forgot the ninth commandment, which says, "Thou shalt not bear false witness." But the nobles attended to what the false witnesses said, and they brought out Naboth,

and stoned him with stones till he died. Then they sent to the queen, and said, "Naboth is dead."

Jezebel was glad to hear this; and she ran directly, and told Ahab, and said, "Go, and take possession of the vineyard. Naboth cannot take it away from thee now, for he is stoned and dead." Then Ahab was pleased and arose directly, and went to Jezreel. But God had seen all this wickedness. He knew all Ahab's selfishness, and all Jezebel's deceit and cruelty. He had heard the lies of the false witnesses, and seen Naboth die; and now He called Elijah, and sent him with a fearful message to Ahab at Jezreel. The wicked king was walking in the vineyard; he felt pleased that he could possess it; and he thought he was safe now that Naboth was dead. But soon Ahab saw Elijah coming to meet him, and he felt very much frightened; for he knew Elijah was sent to him by God. All his possessions could not make Ahab feel safe and happy now. He said to Elijah, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" Elijah answered, "Yes, I have found thee. God has seen thy

sin, and He has sent a message to thee by me. All thy family shall be destroyed, like the families of Jeroboam and Baasha. In the place where Naboth was killed, the dogs shall lick thy blood, and eat the flesh of Jezebel. All this shall come upon thee, because of thine idolatry, and wickedness, and rebellion against God."

Ahab was frightened when he heard this message. His pleasure was all gone; and he went home sorrowfully, and rent his clothes, and ate no food, and spoke humbly and gently. Ahab's repentance and humility soon ended. He was not really sorry for sin, and he did not ask for pardon. But God was so merciful, that when He saw Ahab humbling himself before Him, He said, "I will spare Ahab a little longer. I will not punish his family now." How kind God is! He is willing to save all; and He spares the wicked a long while, to give them time for repentance; but if they still go on in sin, He must punish them at last, as He did Ahab.

CLIII.

AHAB'S DEATH.



WHO was now king of Judah? Asa was dead, and his son Jehoshaphat reigned in Jerusalem.

Jehoshaphat was a good man like his father; but he was friendly with wicked Ahab, and came to see him at Samaria. The Syrians were fighting again against Israel, and Ahab wished very much to go to Ramoth-Gilead, and take it back from the king of Syria; and he asked Jehoshaphat to go with him. The king of Judah was very willing to go: he said, "I am as thou art; my people as thy people; my horses as thy horses." Was this right? No; Jehoshaphat was a servant of God, and Ahab was a wicked idolator; and it is wrong for God's people to choose their friends among Satan's people, and to love their company. Jehoshaphat did not like to go to the battle without asking God's blessing: and he wished Ahab to ask the prophets to tell them the word of the Lord. There were many wicked prophets in Israel then; and Ahab called for some of these, and asked, "Shall I go to Ramoth-Gilead, or no?" Then they all said, "Yes, go; God will give the city into thy hand." But Jehoshaphat feared that these wicked prophets were deceiving Ahab: so he said, "Is there not a prophet of the Lord here? Let us ask of Him." Then Ahab answered, "Yes; there is one man, named Micaiah; but I do not like him, because he always prophesies evil about me, and not good." But Jehoshaphat still wish-

ed to see Micaiah, so Ahab sent a messenger to call him.

When the messenger came to Micaiah, he said, "Go now to Ahab, and prophesy as the other prophets do; they all tell Ahab to go to Ramoth-Gilead to conquer; speak like them: try to please the king; do not make him angry." But Micaiah answered, "I shall speak the truth which God tells me to speak." Micaiah was not afraid of Ahab's anger; but he was very much afraid of making God angry, by speaking lies and deceit. Pray that you, like good Micaiah, may never be afraid of speaking the truth.

The two kings were sitting upon their thrones, dressed in their robes; and all the wicked prophets stood and prophesied before them. The prophets said, "Go to Ramoth-Gilead, and conquer; God shall give it into the king's hand." When Micaiah came in, Ahab said to him, "Tell me now the truth; shall I go to Ramoth-Gilead, and fight and conquer there, or no?" Then Micaiah began to tell Ahab the fearful message God had sent to him. He said, "I saw, in a vision, the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the holy angels standing around him. And the Lord said, who will tempt Ahab to go to Ramoth-Gilead, that he may fall and die there? Then a wicked spirit came to the Lord, and said, I will tempt Ahab to go to Ramoth-Gilead. I will teach his prophets to lie, and deceive him; and they shall persuade him to go. And the Lord said to

the wicked spirit, Go, and do as thou hast said." Then Micaiah turned to Ahab, and said, "These prophets who stand around, are lying prophets. The wicked spirit I saw in the vision, has taught them to deceive; they are tempting thee to go to the battle, and thou shalt fall and die there; for God Himself has spoken evil about thee." Then Ahab grew very angry; and one of the wicked prophets struck Micaiah on the face, and laughed at what he said. Ahab turned to his servants, and said, "Take Micaiah away, and put him in prison, and feed him with bread and water, till I return in peace." But Micaiah said, "Thou wilt never return in peace again;" and then he turned to the people, and said, "Hearken, O people, every one of you."

The good prophet was carried to his prison: and wicked Ahab went with Jehoshaphat to Ramoth-Gilead. But Micaiah was happy and peaceful in the prison, because God was with him there to bless and comfort him. He was more happy than Ahab; for Ahab felt frightened and uncomfortable, because he knew that he was doing wrong, and that God's blessing was not with him.

When the two kings and their armies came to the battle-field, Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself when I go to fight; but put thou on thy robes." Ahab was afraid the Syrians would try to kill him; and he thought he should be safer in disguise, because no one

could know him then. When the Syrians saw Jehoshaphat in his robes, they said, "That is the king of Israel; let us fight him, and kill him." But Jehoshaphat cried, "No, I am not Ahab; I am the king of Judah;" so the Syrians turned away, for they did not want to kill Jehoshaphat. Could they find Ahab? They did not know him in his disguise; but God saw him all the time: Ahab could not hide himself from his eye. One of the Syrians drew a bow, and let the arrow fly. The Syrian could not tell where the arrow might go, nor whom it might shoot: but God knew; He directed the arrow, and it smote Ahab to the heart in his chariot, where he was sitting in disguise. The king felt that he must soon die, and he said to the man who drove the chariot, "Carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded." His friends followed him, and held him up in his chariot, and tried to heal the wound; but they could not cure their master; he died in the evening, and they carried the dead body home to Samaria, and buried it. The chariot was full of blood; and the servants washed it in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs came and licked up the blood, as God had said by Elijah. Ahab was dead now. All his possessions and riches were gone; and he was gone too, to be judged for all his wickedness; his cruelty, and idolatry, and disobedience to God.

CLIV.

KING JEHOShAPHAT.

WHEN the battle with the Syrians was ended, Jehoshaphat went home in peace to Jerusalem. Was God pleased with all that Jehoshaphat had done? No; a prophet came, and said to him, "God is angry with thee, because thou hast helped the ungodly, and loved the enemies of the Lord." But God forgave Jehoshaphat, because he repented of his sin; he did really love the Lord, and try to serve Him. His ungodly friend was dead now, and Jehoshaphat was in his own kingdom; and he taught the people in the right way, and would not let them worship idols. But Jehoshaphat had some enemies to fight. Who were they? The Moabites and the Ammonites; and they came in very great numbers. Jehoshaphat was afraid; but he knew what he ought to do in his danger: he sought the Lord himself, and he commanded his people to fast, and to seek God too. The king, and all his people, went to the temple; and there they prayed for help. Jehoshaphat remembered, that when Solomon had dedicated that house, he had asked God to hear the prayers which His people should pray when they were in trouble. They were in trouble now, and they went to the temple to ask for God's help. All the people stood before the Lord, with their wives, and their little children; and then the good king prayed, and said, "Lord, we know not what to do; but our trust is in thee." Did God

attend to these good people? Yes; while they were praying, God's Spirit came upon a Levite named Jahaziel, and he spoke to them, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid. The battle is not yours but God's. To-morrow you must go down to your enemies; but you need not fight them; you may stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. Fear not, for He is with you." Then Jehoshaphat bowed down to the ground in thankfulness and reverence, and all the people worshipped; and afterwards, they stood up, and sang praises to God. They sang with a loud voice, because they felt so happy, and so thankful to God. They knew that He was their friend, and they did not fear. How pleasant it is to have God for our friend when we are in trouble and danger!

Next day, all the people rose very early to go to the battle: but before they went, Jehoshaphat called them and said, "Believe in the Lord your God; trust in Him and all will be well, and He will give you the victory." Then the good king commanded the singers to go before the army, to praise God, and to give Him thanks. It was a beautiful sight. First, the singers went, praising God in their holy psalms and hymns; and then followed king Jehoshaphat and all his army, not frightened and trembling, but bold and full of courage. When they came to the place where their enemies were, what did they see? The Ammonites and Moabites were all

lying dead upon the ground; there was not one there to hurt Judah. But who had killed them? Not Jehoshaphat; not his army; it was God Himself who had subdued them all. When the people began to sing their psalms of praise, God began to save them from their enemies. The Ammonites, and Moabites, and the people of Mount Seir had quarrelled and fought one against another, till all were killed: and when Judah came to the battle, they found no enemies left to conquer. So they went to the dead bodies, and took off all the fine things that were upon them. There was so much spoil, that Jehoshaphat and his soldiers

were three days gathering it. When they had finished, they all came together, and blessed and thanked God for subduing their enemies; and then they went home to Jerusalem, to the temple, playing on harps and trumpets, and shouting for joy. All the countries round, heard about this wonderful victory; and they feared God very much, for they saw how powerful He was. God gave rest and peace to Jehoshaphat, because he trusted in Him alone, and not in his own strength. God is now as powerful as He was then; and he is still willing to hear his people's prayers, and to comfort and save them in all their troubles.

CLV.

KING AHAZIAH.



AHAZIAH, Ahab's son, was now king of Israel. He was a wicked man like his father. Ahaziah was not taught to love God when he was young. His parents worshipped idols, and taught Ahaziah to do so too. It is sad for children to have wicked parents—fathers and mothers who do not care about God, and who teach their children to love the world and sin.

Ahaziah did not reign many years, and the end of his life was very sad. He fell down from a high window, and was taken up much hurt. But in his sickness, this wicked king did not seek the Lord, the true God, who alone could save him; but he sent to an idol god, Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to ask if he should live or die.

Then an angel came to Elijah from God, and said, "Why does Ahaziah seek Baal-zebub in his sickness, and not the true God, the God of Israel? Go, and tell Ahaziah that he shall not recover from his illness, but shall surely die." Elijah arose directly and went to Samaria, and soon he met the king's messengers who were going to Ekron. Elijah told them what God had said, and sent the messengers back to tell their master. The king wondered to see them again so soon, and he asked, "Why do you return?" They answered, "Because we met a man who told us, that God has said, thou shalt not recover, but must die very soon, because thou hast sought Baal-zebub, and not the God of Israel." Then the king asked, "Who is the man who sends

me this message?" The servants said, "We do not know his name; he is a hairy man, and he wears a leathern girdle." Then Ahaziah said, "I know who he is, he is Elijah the prophet."

Ahaziah hated Elijah as much as his father Ahab had done, and he was very angry when heard the fearful message Elijah sent to him. So this wicked king called one of his captains, and fifty soldiers, and commanded them to go and take Elijah prisoner. The captain soon found the prophet sitting on the top of a hill; and he cried to him, "Thou man of God, the king hath said, come down." But wicked Ahaziah, and his captain, and the soldiers, had no power to hurt God's prophet. God had before often taken care of Elijah, and he could take care of him still. The prophet knew this; and he trusted in God, and did not feel frightened when he saw the soldiers coming to take him. Elijah answered and said to the captain, "If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from Heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty." And God sent fire down from Heaven, and it burnt the captain and his fifty soldiers. All died; not one escaped to tell the king.

Then Ahaziah sent another captain, and fifty soldiers more. Elijah was still upon the hill; he did not try to run away and escape from his enemies. When the second captain called to Elijah to come down, the prophet spoke as he had done before, "Let fire come down from Heaven, and destroy the captain and his fifty soldiers." And fire came again and destroyed them all.

Ahaziah had lost two captains

and a hundred soldiers; yet he sent a third captain and fifty more soldiers, to take Elijah prisoner. The third captain was not like his wicked master; nor like the two other bold wicked captains. He had seen what power Elijah's God had to punish His enemies, and His prophets' enemies; and this third captain began to fear that powerful God, and he came and fell down humbly before Elijah, and asked him to spare him and his fifty soldiers. And did Elijah spare him? Yes; the good prophet was not cruel nor revengeful. When he called down fire on his enemies, it was because God commanded him, not because he himself was angry and passionate. And now God told him not to fear, but to go with the captain to the king; so Elijah arose, and went to Ahaziah. Was Elijah afraid to stand before the wicked king? No; for he knew that God would keep him safely. Elijah spoke very boldly to Ahaziah, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast sought Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, and not the true God of Israel, thou shalt not come down from the bed upon which thou liest, but shalt surely die." Then Elijah left him. Ahaziah had no power to hurt him; God protected his faithful servant.

Ahaziah did not live long after this. He lay upon his bed in pain and sickness, and without any comfort, for a few days; and then he went away to a world of greater pain and greater sorrow. Baal-zebub could not save Ahaziah, and Ahaziah did not seek Israel's God, who alone could save him. How sad it is to lie upon a sick bed with-

out comfort, and to die without hope. Death is a fearful thing to those who are not ready to die; and only those who love the Lord can be ready. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death." *Prov. xiv. 32.*

CLVI.

ELIJAH TAKEN TO HEAVEN.



THE story of Ahaziah's death was very sad; now we are to read another story quite different; the end of a good and holy man; the beautiful story about Elijah going to Heaven.

Elijah had served God many long years; he had suffered much, and God had made him very useful to His people Israel. And now Elijah's life was almost ended; God would soon call him to Heaven. But Elijah did not die as other good people do; God promised that he should go to Heaven without dying. Did God ever take His people to Heaven so before? Yes; Enoch did not die. "He was not, for God took him." It was a great honor and blessing to Enoch and Elijah not to suffer death. Death is a very painful, and a very fearful thing; it is the punishment of sin; but if our sins have been washed away in the blood of Jesus, then the sting of death is gone, and we need not be afraid to die.

Elijah knew that the time was near when he should be taken to Heaven; and he and his servant Elisha went from Gilgal. Elijah was going to see some of his dear friends for the last time, and to bid them farewell. When they had gone a little way, Elijah said to

Elisha, "Stay here now, for the Lord has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha answered, "No, I will not leave thee;" so they both came to Bethel. Did they talk as they walked along? Yes; Elijah told his faithful servant, that he was going away from him soon; he was going to Heaven; but Elisha must stay on earth a little longer. This made Elisha love his dear master still more; for he thought, "I shall not have him with me long; he will soon go away from me. I will not leave him now. I must stay with him, and hear all his last words."

There was a school at Bethel for the sons of the prophets; and when the young prophets saw Elijah and Elisha coming, they ran to them, and said to Elisha, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master to-day?" Elisha did not wish them to speak about it; so he said softly, "Yes, I know it;" and walked on with Elijah. Then Elijah said, "Stay here, for God has sent me to Jericho." But Elisha answered, "No, I cannot leave thee;" and they both went on to Jericho. There was another school at Jericho; and the sons of the prophets came, and said to Elisha, "Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master to-day?" Elisha said,

"Yes, I know it; hold your peace." Then Elijah told Elisha, that God had sent him to Jordan; but Elisha still kept close to his dear master, and said, "I cannot, I will not leave thee;" so they came together to Jordan. Elijah took off his mantle, and smote the waters with it; and the waters divided, and Elijah and Elisha went over on dry ground. Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask now, what shall I give thee; what shall I do for thee before I go away?" Elijah had not any worldly possessions to give; and Elisha did not want them; for he knew they could not make him happy. But Elisha wanted to be like his master; he wanted to be a holy prophet of the Lord; so he said, "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." It was God's Spirit that made Elijah so holy, and that taught him to prophesy, and to do the wonderful things we have been reading about. Could Elijah give the Holy Spirit to Elisha? No; for that is the gift of God alone; but Elijah could ask God to give His Spirit to Elisha. Elijah said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: but if thou see me taken up, thou shalt have thy wish; but if not, thou shalt not have it." Elisha asked for a good gift; may we ask for it too? Yes; God promises to give His Holy Spirit to all who ask Him. Not the wonderful spirit of prophecy which He gave to Elijah; God does not now give that to His people; but the Spirit to cleanse and renew our hearts, and to make us pure and holy.

Elijah and Elisha still went on, and talked one to the other, for they had much to say. Elijah was giving his last advice, and Elisha was very attentive to all his words, for

he knew that he should never hear his master speak again. But while they were talking, a bright chariot of fire appeared, and horses of fire. They came from Heaven to carry up Elijah safely there. Elijah was parted from Elisha in a moment. Elisha looked up, and he saw his dear master in the bright chariot, going to Heaven in joy and triumph, and he cried, "O, my father, my father!" But very soon Elisha could see his master no more. He was gone far away, above the clouds, and the blue sky, to a world which Elisha's eye could not see. Then Elisha felt very sad; and he took his garments, and rent them in pieces. He was alone now, without Elijah to teach and comfort him; but when he remembered his master's happiness, he was comforted; and he thought, "When I die, I shall see him again."

All Elijah's troubles were ended now. He had no more wicked, cruel enemies to hurt him. He would never be sorry again, as he was in the wilderness of Beersheba. God's people are glad to go away from this world, because it is a world of sin; and they are glad to go to Heaven, because that is a world of holiness; a world where God is; and where they will see Him face to face. They are not taken up to Heaven in chariots of fire; that was an honor God gave to Elijah alone. Holy people must now die before they can go to Heaven, and perhaps they may die in great pain and suffering; but God is with them to comfort them; and soon all their sufferings end, and then He sends His holy angels to carry their happy souls to Heaven.

CLVII

WICKED CHILDREN PUNISHED.



DID Elisha stay long looking up to Heaven? No; when he could see no more, he took up the mantle, which had fallen from Elijah, and went back to Jordan. Then he smote the river with the mantle, and the waters parted again, and Elisha went over on dry ground. Was Elijah's spirit upon Elisha now? Yes; God had heard Elijah's prayer, and given Elisha what he wished. He gave him all the wonderful power which He had before given to Elijah. The sons of the prophets at Jericho saw what Elisha did, and they said, "The spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha."

Elisha stayed a little time at Jericho. It was a pleasant city; but the water there was very bad, and the ground was barren. The people of the place came to Elisha, and told him this. They were troubled about their land, and their corn; and they thought, that perhaps Elisha could help them. Then Elisha desired them to bring a cruse of salt; and he went to the spring of the waters, and threw the salt in there, and said, "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall be no more dry and barren land." And the waters were healed; but it was not the salt that healed them; it was not Elisha's power; it was God who did the miracle; and He honored His servant Elisha very much in attending to what he asked.

Elisha then went away from Jericho, to go to Bethel. There were a

great many little children at Bethel not holy children taught in the prophet's schools to know and fear God; no, these children had been taught to worship idols, and to despise God, and His prophets. When the children saw Elisha coming, they went out to meet him. Why? Did they want him to teach them about the true God, and to ask questions about Elijah, and to hear the wonderful things Elisha could tell them? No; these children came to laugh at Elisha, and to mock him: they cried, "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head." Elisha heard what they said; and he turned back, and looked upon them gravely, to warn them of their sin. What was their sin? Despising God's servant. It is very wicked to laugh at holy people, and holy things. God is angry with those who are unkind to His people; for He loves His people, and He will not let the wicked hurt and despise them. His eyes saw those naughty children, and He punished them for their sin. Elisha cursed them in the name of the Lord. He was not angry because they were disrespectful to himself, but because they tried to dishonor God. How did God punish the wicked children? He sent two bears out of the wood, and they tore forty-two children to pieces! God can make the animals do what he pleases. He could send a lion to kill the disobedient prophet; now, He sent the two bears to punish the wicked children. They could not

escape. They could not run away, nor defend themselves. They saw that God honored Elisha; and they felt how wicked they had been; but it was too late to ask for forgiveness now. There was no time to run to Elisha, and tell him how sorry they were, and ask him to pray to God to forgive and spare them.

God looks upon children now. He knows who try to love Him, and who despise Him, and do not care for holy people and holy things; and He does not love those who forget Him; His blessing is not upon

them; they cannot have His smile, and His love. Perhaps He may soon strike them dead in their wickedness, before they grow up to be men and women. Perhaps they may die in some dreadful way, without having time to repent and turn to God. He is willing to save them, if they will come to Him. Jesus says, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." *Proverbs* viii. 17. "Suffer the little children to come unto me." *Luke* xviii. 16.

CLVIII.

THE MOABITES CONQUERED.

JORAM, who was king of Israel now, was a very wicked man. He was like his father Ahab, and his mother Jezebel, and his brother Ahaziah. The king of Moab rebelled against Joram; so Joram went to fight against him, and asked Jehoshaphat to go too. Jehoshaphat had done wrong before when he helped Ahab, and now he did wrong again; for he said to Joram, "I will go with thee." The Bible says, "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not." *Proverbs* i. 10. God's people ought not to love the company of the wicked. We may be kind to them, and pray for them, and try to do them good; but we must not be too often with them. Perhaps they may tempt us to forget God, and to love the world and sin. We ought to try always to be with good people, who will teach us what is right. Jehoshaphat was a

weak man; and he forgot to ask God to give him strength to resist temptation.

Joram, and Jehoshaphat, and their armies, began their journey, and came into the wilderness of Edom. But there was no water for them in the wilderness; and soon they all began to suffer from thirst very much, and Joram said, "We are come here to fall into the hands of the king of Moab!" Joram had no friend to comfort him in his sorrow: but Jehoshaphat remembered that he had a friend in Heaven who could help him in all his troubles. Jehoshaphat truly loved God; and now he remembered his sin, and asked for pardon. And then Jehoshaphat gave very good advice to wicked Joram. He said, "Let us ask one of God's prophets what we must do. God can help us in our trouble." One of Joram's servants said, "Here is Elisha, the servant

of Elijah." Then Jehoshaphat said, "He is a prophet of the Lord: let us go to him." So the two kings went to Elisha to ask him what they must do. But when the prophet saw Joram, he looked upon him very gravely, for he knew what a wicked man he was, and asked, "Why hast thou come to me? Go to the prophets of Baal; they are the prophets of thy father and thy mother; thou lovest Baal, not God: go to him." Joram answered, "We are in great trouble; we are suffering from thirst in this wilderness, and soon Moab will come and destroy us." Then Elisha said, "Because of Jehoshaphat, I will attend to thee; but I cannot look upon thee alone, nor see thee. Thou art an enemy of God; but Jehoshaphat is His friend and servant." Then Elisha commanded a minstrel to play to him; and while the minstrel was playing, God's spirit came upon Elisha, and taught him what he must say to the two kings. He said, "Thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches. You shall not see wind, nor rain; but the valley shall be filled with water. And I will give the Moabites into your power." This was a very wonderful promise, but not too powerful for God to perform; nothing is too wonderful for Him.

The next morning, Jehoshaphat, and Joram, and their armies, saw water rushing along to the wilderness where they were. They knew not how the water came; but they watched it flowing on, and at last all the valley was filled, and all the country round. God had, many years before, given His people

Israel water from a rock. He had made a river in the wilderness for them, and now He could bring water into the wilderness again. These were miracles God alone could do. All things obey Him. The animals, and the sun, and the moon, and the trees, and the grass, and the rain, and the seas, and the rivers,—all these things belong to God, and He can do what He pleases with them. He commands the sun to shine, and the rain to fall, and the waters to flow; and they all obey. We cannot tell how God does these wonders; for we understand very little of His power and His works. But we know that all He does is wise and good; we know that He will give His people all they need, and He will keep them in all dangers, and help them in all their troubles.

And now the Moabites made ready to go to the battle. They rose very early in the morning; the sun was shining brightly upon the water in the valley, and made it look red like blood. The Moabites did not know what a wonderful thing God had done; they did not understand that he had sent water into the valley to refresh His people. So the Moabites looked in wonder at the red water, and at last they said, "This is blood. The kings must be slain; they have smitten one another; and now we will go and take the spoil." The Moabites were very foolish to think this. When God leaves wicked people to think for themselves, and to trust to their own wisdom, they often do and think very foolish things. The Moabites came to the camp of Israel to take the spoil;

and then they found that the kings and their armies were not dead, but all ready to fight. The Israelites rose up directly, and drove away the Moabites, and followed after them, and smote them. The king of Moab tried to conquer Israel, but he could not; and he was in great trouble, because they besieged the city where he was; and he had none to help him. He did not know the true God, Israel's God; the god he worshipped was an idol named Chemosh. The Moabites thought that their god Chemosh was pleased with blood; and they often sacrificed their children to him in times

of trouble. The king of Moab had a son; and now, in his difficulty and danger, he took his poor son, and carried him to the top of the walls, and sacrificed him there to Chemosh, his god! The wicked king thought that this might make Chemosh help him, and give him power to conquer Israel. When the Israelites saw what the king had done, they were so filled with horror, that they went away, and returned to their own land. They must have felt thankful that their God was a God of love, not a God like Chemosh, pleased with blood and cruelty.

 OLIX.

THE POT OF OIL.



ONE day, a poor woman came to Elisha in great trouble. Her husband was dead. He was one of the sons of the prophets; a good man, but very poor. He owed money, and died before he could pay his debts. If this good man had lived longer, he would, no doubt, have tried very hard to earn money to pay what he owed. It is not right to be in debt. The Bible says, "Owe no man anything." *Romans* xiii. 8. But the poor man was now dead, and could do nothing; and when the creditor came to ask for the money, the widow had none to give him. Then the creditor said, "If I cannot have the debt paid, I must take away thy two sons, and sell them for slaves." The poor woman cried very much when

she heard this. She had lost her husband, and now must she lose her children also? She did not know how to get money to pay the debt; so she went to Elisha, and told her trouble to him. The prophet was very kind, and willing to help her. Did he help her to escape from her creditor without paying the debt? or did he pay the money for her himself? No; Elisha told her she must try to earn the money. When people are in debt, they should always try to pay their creditors. It is very dishonest to run away without paying; it is like stealing. But what could the poor widow do? Elisha asked, "What hast thou in the house?" The woman answered, "I have only a pot of oil." Then Elisha told her to go to all her neighbors, and ask them to lend her

some empty vessels. The woman obeyed, and soon she brought home a great many; for her friends were very kind, and willing to lend the vessels. But what was she to do with all these vessels? Elisha told her. He said, "Go to thine house, and shut the doors. Then take the pot of oil, and pour out into the empty vessels." The woman and her sons did as Elisha said. Vessel after vessel they filled with oil; but the oil in the pot did not grow less; God multiplied it, as He did the oil and the meal of the poor widow at Zarephath. At last, all the vessels were full of oil. Then the woman went and told Elisha, and asked, "What must I do now?" Elisha said, "Go, and sell the oil, and pay the debt with the money; and then, thou and thy children may live upon what is left." The widow must pay her debt *first*. She must first think about her duty to her creditor, and afterwards about herself and her children. The oil was soon sold; and the widow had then plenty of money;

and she went directly and paid her debt. This was right; and God did not leave her without food for herself and children; for He never forsakes those who trust in Him, and try to please Him. The poor widow was happy now. She could rest quietly, because she owed nothing, and had no more fear that her sons would be taken away and sold for slaves.

Poor people ought to try to be like this widow. She was honest and industrious. She did all she could to help herself; but she trusted in God alone, and asked Him to teach her what she must do. Poor people now, if they serve God, will not be idle nor dishonest. He will not let His people want what is good, and right, and best for them. "He relieveth the fatherless and widow." *Psalms* cxlvi. 9. He comforts them in their sorrow and poverty, and tells them not to fear, but to trust in Him for all they want. He says, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." *Jeremiah* xlix. 11.

CLX.

THE GOOD SHUNAMMITE.



ELISHA used often to go to a place named Shunem, where a good woman lived who was very rich.

This woman loved God; and as she knew that Elisha was a prophet of God, she loved and honored him too. One day, when she saw Elisha passing by, she ran and called him into her house, and gave him food to refresh him on his journey. Elisha went to Shunem many times afterwards, and he always turned into the house where the good woman and her husband lived. They were glad to see him, because he was a holy man; and he talked about God and Heaven, and taught them many good and holy things. The kind Shunammite prepared a little room in her house for Elisha. She put in it for him, a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick; and when Elisha wanted to be quiet, and to read and think alone, he used to go into this little room. How kind the Shunammite was! Why did she honor Elisha so much? Because she loved God; she knew that Elisha was the prophet of God, and she showed her love to Elisha's master by honoring Elisha. We ought always to be kind and generous to those who come to us, and to love God's people very much, and try to comfort them and do them good. St. Paul says, "Distribute to the necessity of the saints, and be given to hospitality." *Romans* xii. 13.

Elisha was thankful to the good

Shunammite, and wished to show kindness to her, as she showed kindness to him. But he could not pay her with money, and she did not want money; she had enough. So Elisha asked her, "What shall I do for thee? Shall I speak for thee to the king, or to the captain of the army? Can they do anything for thee?" But the Shunammite said, "No, I want no honors; I am happy and contented to live quietly among my own people." This good woman knew that God could give her a better possession than the king of Israel could. She did not want worldly riches, and worldly honors; all her riches were in Heaven. She was contented with what God was pleased to give her now; and she knew that when she died, He would give her eternal glory, and riches which would never pass away. What could Elisha do for this contented woman? What did she want? Gehazi, Elisha's servant, said, "She has no child; perhaps she would like a son." Then Elisha asked God to give a little son to this good Shunammite, to comfort her, and make her happy. He knew God would hear his prayer, and he called the woman, and said to her, "Very soon, God will give thee a son." The woman wondered when Elisha told her this; but God attended to Elisha's prayer, and, soon after, the little boy was born.

The mother was much pleased to have this dear child, and very thankful to God who gave him to her.

She took great care of her little son while he was a babe; and when he grew older, she began to teach him about those holy things which parents who love God always try to teach their children. The little boy grew, and soon he could run about, and talk, and learn many things. One day, in harvest time, his mother sent him into the fields where his father was, to see the men reaping the corn. The little boy was much pleased to stand there by his dear father, and looked at the beautiful yellow corn. It was a very hot day. The sun shone brightly, and it struck the head of the little boy, and made him feel very sick; and he cried to his father, "My head, my head!" He was in great pain, and could not stay longer in the fields: so his kind father called a lad, and said, "Carry the child to his mother." She took him on her lap, and nursed him, and kissed him, and did all she could for him; but he grew worse and worse; and, after a few hours, he died in her arms. Death often comes very suddenly to little children, and to grown-up people too. When we awake in the morning, we may feel well and strong; but, perhaps, before night we may be cold and dead. We cannot tell when we shall die. Perhaps we may die very soon; perhaps we may die suddenly, like this little boy. Are we ready to die? Have our sins been all washed away in Jesus's blood? Have our hearts been made new by the Holy Spirit? If they have, then we are ready: and we need not fear even if we should die to-day, because we should go to a better world where there is no more pain nor sorrow.

When the mother saw that her little boy was dead, she carried him up into Elisha's room, and laid him upon the bed. Then she told the servant to saddle an ass directly, and to ride with her to Mount Carmel. Why? Because she wanted to see Elisha, and to tell her sorrows to him. This woman had great faith in God; she knew He could raise her child to life again if He pleased. She took a long journey; and when she came near to Mount Carmel, Elisha saw her, and sent Gehazi to meet her. Then Gehazi ran to her, and asked, "Is all well? Is it well with my husband? Is it well with the child?" The mother answered, "Yes, all is well." She knew all was right, because done by God. Though He had taken away her child, yet she knew all was "well." When the Shunammite came to Elisha, she ran and caught him by the feet; she was so full of sorrow she could not speak. Gehazi wanted to push her away; but Elisha said, "No, she is unhappy, and we must be kind and gentle to her." Elisha soon understood what it was that made her sorry; and then he told Gehazi to go before very quickly to the Shunammite's house, and lay his staff upon the child's face. Gehazi obeyed. He went to the house, and into the room where the little dead boy lay, and put his master's staff upon the child's face. But there was no voice; the child could not see, nor hear, nor speak to Gehazi. Then Gehazi went to meet his master, who was following slowly with the poor mother, and said, "The child is not awaked." So Elisha came on to the house, and then he went alone into his room,

and looked at the child. He was dead. The staff was upon his face, but the staff had no power to make him live; and Elisha himself had no power; God alone could raise the child to life again. Elisha knew this; so he shut the door, and prayed to the Lord. Then he went and lay upon the child, and soon the child began to grow warm. Then Elisha walked about the room, praying in his heart, and waiting God's time to raise the little dead boy. At last, the child sneezed; and then Elisha knew that he was alive, and that God had heard his prayer. The little boy sneezed again seven times, and opened his eyes. Then Elisha called the Shunammite; and when she came in, he showed her the child alive and well, and said, "Take up thy son." The mother bowed herself down to the ground in thankful-

ness, and took up the child, and went out.

When Jesus Christ was on earth, He often raised dead people to life by His own power; for He had power to do all things, because He was God. But Elisha was only a man, and had no power himself; all he had God gave him. God is not now pleased to raise the dead by miracles. When people die, they are put into their graves, and we see them no more. But will those dead bodies never live again? Yes, at some future day, we cannot tell when, they will all be raised, and come out of the tombs, and stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised." *1 Corinthians* xv. 52. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." *John* v. 25.

CLXI.

THE PROPHETS FED.



LISHA now went to Gilgal. There was a famine in the land, and many of the poor people were suffering from hunger. Elisha called the sons of the prophets, and they all sat before him, while he taught them the things of God. These good men did not care for their bodies so much as they cared for their souls; they liked to hear Elisha talk better than to enjoy all the good things in the world. But Elisha knew that they needed food; so he told his servant to put the great pot upon the fire, and to make pottage for the sons of the prophets.

One of them went into the fields to gather herbs for the pottage; and he found there some wild gourds, and gathered a great many, and brought them home, and threw them into the pot. When the pottage was ready, Elisha poured it out, and gave them all some to eat. It was a very poor dinner, but the sons of the prophets were not discontented; they made no complaints; they took what was given them, and began to eat. But when they tasted the pottage, they found that poison was there; and they cried to Elisha, "There is poison in the pot; we shall die if we eat it."

The wild gourds were poisonous, but the man who gathered them did not know this. Elisha told them not to fear, but to bring him some meal. Then he threw the meal into the pottage; and the pottage became good and wholesome, and the prophets ate it without fear. It was not the meal alone that made the pottage wholesome. It was God who took away the poison, and preserved His servants from sickness and death.

Elisha had a kind friend who sent him food; twenty loaves, and some corn to make bread. But Elisha did not want to keep all for himself. He thought first about the poor men who were with him, and said to his servant, "Give the people some food to eat." But the servant said, "There are a hundred men here, and there is very little food; not enough for so many." Then Elisha told the servant again, to make it ready for the people, and said, "God has told me that there shall be more than enough for all." So the servant called the people,

and set the food before them. They all ate, and had enough; and when they had finished, some was left still. God's power had multiplied the food, that His hungry people might have enough to strengthen and refresh them. God took care of the sons of the prophets. They loved Him, and tried to serve Him, and trusted in Him for all things; and He did not let them want. In the time of famine He did not leave them to die of hunger; He gave them food in a very wonderful way.

And God takes care of His people now. He does not multiply their food by a miracle, because He does not choose to work miracles now; but He can preserve His people without them. Sometimes, kind friends visit the poor when they are in trouble, and give them food. But who sends the friends with the food? God; all comes from Him. His people know this and they thank Him for it first, and then they thank the kind earthly friend who brought it.

CLXII.

THE LITTLE MAID.



HE king of Syria had a captain over his army, named Naaman. Naaman was a very rich man; and his master loved and honored him, because he was brave, and fought his battles for him; so Naaman had much to make him happy; but there was one thing which spoilt all his joys and pleasures. What was it? Naaman was a leper. We have read before about the leprosy, and what a dreadful disease it was. There was no cure for the leprosy. No medicine, no physician, could cleanse it. God alone could take it away. Poor Naaman! His leprosy made him feel very sad; and he often wished he could be well, and enjoy all his riches and honors. There is always something in this world to make us unhappy; we cannot have all we want. Solomon was very rich, richer than Naaman, but he was not happy. He said, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." If we had all the riches of the world, we should still feel like Solomon and Naaman. There would be something to vex us. Sickness or trouble, or pain, would spoil all our worldly joys. How foolish it is then to love worldly things so much! They must disappoint us; but if our affections are set on things above, we cannot be disappointed. God can give us real joy which will never pass away.

But Naaman knew nothing of God. He was an idolater. The king of Syria and all his people were idolaters. Naaman was sick

and sorrowful, and he had nothing to comfort him. Some time before, the Syrians had fought with Israel, and taken prisoner a little Israelitish girl, and brought her to Syria. The little maid was taken to Naaman's house, and she waited upon his wife. She was a very obedient and gentle little girl. She tried to please her mistress, and was always respectful and kind to her. Her master and mistress were kind to her; and the little maid loved them, and felt grateful to them. When she saw her master suffering so much, she was very sorry, and she thought, "I wish I could help my master." Then she remembered that there were lepers in her own country. She had heard of the laws about the leprosy; and she knew, too, that Israel's God had power to cure it. And she recollected Elisha, and all the miracles he had done, and she thought, "God gives great power to Elisha. He has raised the dead to life; he has fed the people in the famine; he has done many more wonderful things. Perhaps God would give him power to cleanse my master of his leprosy." It was right of the little girl to think about these things. She was far away from God's people; but she loved them still, and liked to remember them, and talk of them. We may hope that this little girl truly loved and served the God of Israel, and that she had faith in Him, and trusted in Him as her father and her friend, when she was far away from her earthly friends.

We shall soon see how God blesse this little maid, and how useful He made her to her master.

One day, when the little girl was waiting upon her mistress, she said, "I wish my master could see the prophet who is in Samaria. God gives great power to that prophet. He has done many wonderful things. He would cure my master of his leprosy." Her mistress was surprised; but she sent and told Naaman what the little maid had said. Naaman was glad to hear that he could be cured; and his master, the king of Syria, was glad, too. He called Naaman, and said, "Go to

the land of Israel; I will give thee a letter for the king there, and he will tell thee how to be cured of thy leprosy." So Naaman made ready his horses, and chariots, and servants, and went to Samaria. How glad the little maid was to see her master go! She hoped that soon he would come home again cleansed and cured of his leprosy. Perhaps she prayed that her master might learn to worship the God of Israel, and give up his idols; for if the little girl loved God herself, she must have wished all her friends to love Him too.

CLXIII.

NAAMAN.

NAAMAN now made all ready for his journey; he took the king of Syria's letter, and a present for the king of Israel, and went to Samaria. Joram was king of Israel at that time; and Naaman went to him, and gave him his master's letter. Joram took the letter, and opened it, and read thus: "I have sent my servant Naaman to thee, that thou mayst cure him of his leprosy." Then Joram wondered very much, and said, "Why does the king of Syria send this leper to me? I cannot cure him. Does the king of Syria seek a quarrel with me?" And Joram rent his clothes, because he was so angry and vexed about the king of Syria's letter. Joram did not think nor care about Elisha; and he forgot what wonderful things

God gave His prophets power to do. But Elisha soon heard that Naaman was come, and that Joram had rent his clothes, because the king of Syria had asked him to cure Naaman: and Elisha sent to Joram, and said, "Why hast thou rent thy clothes? Send Naaman to me; I will show him that there is a prophet in Israel." So Joram told Naaman what Elisha said; and Naaman went with his chariot and horses to Elisha's house, and stood before the door. Naaman was a very proud man. He thought very much about himself, and his riches, and his possessions, and his honors; and he wanted Elisha to see what a great man he was, and to show him honor. Elisha knew how proud Naaman was; and he knew too, that Naaman must learn to be humble, before God could be merci-

ful to him, and cleanse him from his leprosy. So the good prophet did not go out to see Naaman, and to admire and honor him; but he sent his servant to him with this message: "Go, and wash seven times in Jordan, and thou shalt be clean." Did Naaman obey? No; it was a very easy command, but Naaman did not like it. Why not? Because he thought Elisha had not honored him. He said, "Why did not the prophet come out to me, and call upon his God, and put his hand upon me, and cure the leprosy? Why must I wash in Jordan? Can the waters of Jordan cure me? I have better rivers in Damascus, in my own country. May I not wash in them, and be clean?" So he turned, and went away in a rage. Naaman was too proud to be cured in God's way; but God would not cure Naaman in *his* way. It was not Jordan's waters that had power to cleanse the leprosy; God alone could cure it; but Naaman was to obey God's command, and to submit to His will, and to have faith in Him; and then God promised to cure him; but not while Naaman was disobedient and rebellious, and proud. Naaman still suffered from his leprosy; and it was his own fault; because he was too proud to obey Elisha's easy command. But the servants of Naaman were sorry to see their master so angry. They wished him to be well; and they knew that he could not be cured if he did not obey the prophet's command. So the servants came to Naaman, and spoke to him very respectfully, because he was their master, but very affectionately too, because they loved him as their friend. The servants said to Naa-

man, "My father, if the prophet had told thee to do a great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? But he has told thee to do a very easy thing; wash, and be clean: wilt thou not obey this easy command?" Naaman attended to what his servants said. He felt that they were right, and that he had done wrong in so proudly going away from Elisha's door. And Naaman was humble now. He was willing to be cured in God's way, not in his own proud way: so he went to the river Jordan, and dipped himself in it seven times, as Elisha had told him. And was he cured? Yes; the leprosy left him; his flesh became new and soft, and he was cleansed and cured. How glad Naaman was, now that he had obeyed the command; and how thankful he felt to God, and to Elisha the prophet of God! He believed now that the God of Israel was the only and the true God.

All the people in the world have, like leprous Naaman, a very sad disease. It is not a disease of the body, but it is a disease of the soul. What is it? This disease is sin. Leprosy is a type of sin. Sin makes us unclean in the sight of God; He is too holy to look upon it; and if not cleansed from sin, we cannot go to be with God in Heaven. What can make us clean? The Bible tells us, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." We must come to Jesus, as Naaman came to the river Jordan, in humility and faith; knowing that we have no power to cleanse ourselves, but that Christ is able and willing to cleanse us; and then, like Naaman, we shall be made clean.

CLXIV.

G E H A Z I .



AS Naaman very thankful for his cure? Yes; when he saw that he was cleansed, he returned with all his company to Samaria, and went to Elisha, and stood humbly before him. Naaman was not now, as he had been, a little time ago, proud and self-willed. He had become humble, and submissive, and obedient; God had made him so by His Holy Spirit. All our hearts are proud and rebellious, till they are made new; but God, if we ask him, can take away our sinful passions, as he took away Naaman's.

Naaman said to Elisha, I know now that Israel's God is the only true God. He has cured me of my leprosy; and I wish now to serve and worship Him alone." Then Naaman wanted to give a present to Elisha, but the good prophet said, "No, I will have nothing." Naaman was right to feel thankful to Elisha; and Elisha was right in not wanting a reward. God's people should be glad and thankful to be useful, and not wish to be paid for what they do. Elisha was poor, and Naaman was rich; but Elisha was contented with the little God gave him, and he did not covet Naaman's riches. Then Naaman said again to Elisha, "I will in future, offer sacrifices only to Israel's God: I will never again pray to the idol-gods of Syria. But my master, the king of Syria, is an idolater still. He goes to the temple of the idol Rimmon to worship

there: and when he goes, he will command me to go with him: and he will lean upon my hand: and when he bows down to worship Rimmon, I must bow down too; but I shall not pray to Rimmon in my heart, but to the true God. But will He forgive me when I bow down in the idol-temple?" Then Elisha answered, "Go in peace;" for he believed that the heart of Naaman was sincere; and that God would teach him the right way.

But the end of this story is very sad. Elisha's servant, Gehazi, was not like his good master. Gehazi, indeed knew much about God: for Elisha had often talked to him of holy things, and Gehazi had seen many wonderful miracles which God gave Elisha power to do. But Gehazi was not the better for all these blessings. He did not love God; he had never prayed for pardon, and for a new heart. His heart was full of wicked thoughts; he was covetous, and he loved the world better than he loved God. When Gehazi saw his master refuse Naaman's present, he felt very angry, and he thought to himself, "My master will not take anything from this rich Syrian; but I will run after Naaman, and take something from him for myself." So Gehazi followed after Naaman; and he thought Elisha would not know where he was gone.

When Naaman turned round, and saw Gehazi coming, he came down from his chariot, and went to meet him, and asked, "Is all well?"

Gehazi answered, "Yes; all is well: but just now, two young prophets have come to my master; and he has sent me to thee to ask for some silver and garments for them, because they are poor." This story was not true; but Naaman believed it, and gave the silver and the garments to two of his servants, and they carried them before Gehazi. But when they came near Elisha's house, Gehazi took Naaman's presents away from the servants, and sent them back; and then he took the garments and the money, and hid them in the house, and went into Elisha's room and stood before his master. Then Elisha asked, "Where hast thou been, Gehazi?" The wicked servant was afraid to confess his deceit and his covetousness, and said, "I went no where." But Gehazi could not deceive the prophet. Elisha knew all that Gehazi had been doing, and he looked very gravely upon him, and said, "Went not my heart with thee, when Naaman came out of his chariot to meet thee? Did he not give

thee silver and garments? hast thou not coveted and taken all these things? And now God will punish thee for this wickedness; the leprosy of Naaman shall be upon thee, and upon thy children for ever." And as soon as Elisha had said this, God smote Gehazi with leprosy, and he went out "a leper as white as snow." His riches could do him no good now; they could not cure his leprosy. He could stay no longer with his good master, and hear the holy things he taught. No; Gehazi had made God angry, and Elisha, and therefore, he must go away far from God's holy people, and live alone in pain and sorrow. Covetousness and deceit and lying are dreadful sins, which God always punishes. The Bible says, "No covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." *Ephesians* v. 5. And "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." *Revelation* xxi. 8.

CLXV.

THE BORROWED AXE.



ONE day, the sons of the prophets came to Elisha, and said, "The place where we live is too little for us; we want more room. Let us go now to Jordan, and cut down wood, and make a place there where we may dwell." Elisha answered, "Yes, go." Then one of them said, "Come with us;" so Elisha arose and went with them to Jordan. These good people all loved one another very much. The sons of the prophets honored Elisha as their master and teacher, and he loved and took care of them as his children and disciples. How pleasant it is to live in love one with another! All God's people ought to live so, for it is the command of Christ. The people of the world fight and quarrel with one another, because Satan is their master, and he teaches them to be as himself, full of anger, and hatred, and jealousy. But the people of God must not be like them. Their master, Jesus Christ, was meek and gentle, and kind, and forgiving; and he tells His servants to be so too. He says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." *John* xiii. 35.

Elisha and the sons of the prophets went to Jordan. There were a great many of them. God had multiplied them very much. He can take care of His people, and make them increase, even when their enemies try to persecute and destroy them. The sons of the prophets were poor; but they were very happy, because

God's love and blessing rested upon them. When they came to Jordan, they all began to cut down wood. Not one was idle; for they knew how wrong it is to be idle. The Bible tells us not to be slothful; but to do what we have to do, with all our might, and strength, and power. While the sons of the prophets were cutting down the wood, near the river, an accident happened. The iron head of the axe of one of the men fell into the water, and sank to the bottom. The poor man ran to Elisha, and cried, "Alas, master, for it was borrowed." The man was right to be sorry. This showed that he was not selfish; he did not say, "The axe is not mine, and I do not care for my friend's loss." No; he knew that it is right to take great care of the things which belong to other people, and to return them honestly and thankfully. "The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again;" but good people always return what is lent to them.

Did Elisha help the poor man? Did he give him a new axe, or money to buy one? No; Elisha was poor also; he had no new axe, and no money to give. What could be done? Elisha asked the man where the axe-head had fallen. The man showed him the place, and then Elisha cut down a stick, and threw it in there. And what happened? The heavy iron, which had sunk to the bottom of the river, now rose to the top, and swam upon the water like wood. Then

Elisha said, "Take it up;" and the man put out his hand, and took it. The axe was soon mended, and then the poor man could begin his work again. How pleased and thankful he was!

But what made the heavy iron swim? Had the stick power to make the iron axe-head rise to the top of the water? No; it was not the stick, it was God's power that did the miracle. God, who made the iron and the water too, could do as He pleased with both; and, when He commanded, the iron swam like wood. We cannot tell how this was; but we know that God can do all

things; nothing is too hard for Him. And how kind God was to the poor man! He knew his sorrows, and commanded Elisha to help him, and worked this wonderful miracle to comfort him in his trouble. God's eye sees all our sorrows. When we are unhappy, God knows it; and, if we are His people, He will comfort us in our troubles—great troubles, and little troubles too. He knows them all; and He feels for us in them all. What a kind God and Father we have in Heaven! Let us try to love and trust in Him more and more.

CLXVI.

ELISHA PROTECTED.

THE king of Syria now came again to fight against Joram, king of Israel. The king of Syria pitched his camp, hoping that he might take his enemy by surprise; but Elisha sent many times to Joram, and warned him not to go to the place where the Syrians were; so Joram saved himself from his enemies. This troubled the king of Syria very much; and he called his servants, and said, "Tell me who it is that does this? Who tells the king of Israel where I pitch my camp?" The servants answered, "It is Elisha the prophet. He knows all the secret things thou doest, and tells them to the king of Israel." Then the king of Syria was very angry with Elisha; and he made ready his chariots, and horses, and a great army, and sent

them to Dothan, where Elisha was, to take him prisoner. When the soldiers came to Dothan, it was night. None saw them coming; all were asleep: so the army surrounded the city, and waited till morning. Elisha's servant rose very early that morning, and went out; and he saw the city surrounded with horses, and chariots, and soldiers, all enemies of the good prophet. The servant was very much frightened; and he cried, and said, "Alas, my master! what shall we do?" Was Elisha frightened? No; he knew that God had more power than all his enemies, and trusted in God to take care of him in this danger; and then he felt safe and happy. And then Elisha spoke to his servant, and said to him, "Fear not; there are more with us than with our enemies;" for Elisha saw

what the servant could not see; a wonderful and beautiful sight which comforted him, and made him feel safe. Then Elisha prayed that the servant might be able to see this wonderful sight too; and God heard Elisha's prayer, and opened the young man's eyes; and then he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." These chariots and horses were sent to protect Elisha from his enemies. Who sent them? God Himself. His holy angels in Heaven are always ready to help and protect His people on earth. Elisha's enemies could not see this heavenly host; but God gave Elisha and his servant power to see them. Elisha had indeed no need to fear; for his wicked enemies could not resist the power of God's messengers.

If *we* are the people of God, He

sends his holy angels to protect *us*. "The angels of the Lord encamp round about them that fear Him, and deliver them." We cannot see these bright, holy angels. They are spirits; they are not made of flesh and blood as we are. But they are always by us. When we are in danger, they are near to protect us. When we are asleep in the dark night, they watch around our beds; and when we die they will be near us, and carry our happy souls to Heaven to be with God for ever. The holy angels love to be sent to God's people, to help and comfort them; and they are never tired of obeying God, and doing His work. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" *Hebrews i. 14.*

CLXVII.

THE FAMINE IN SAMARIA.



UT what did Elisha do when his enemies came to take him prisoner? Again he asked help of God: he asked Him to smite his enemies with blindness; and God did so. The Syrians became blind and helpless; and then they had no power to hurt Elisha. So Elisha came to them, and said, "Follow me, and I will bring you to the man you seek." Then he led them into Samaria. The poor blind men did not know where they were going; but when they were come to Samaria, Elisha asked God to open their eyes again; and

God gave sight to the Syrians. What did they see? They saw themselves surrounded by their enemies. The king of Israel was there, and all his army. Elisha was close to them; but they were afraid to take him now. Then the king said to Elisha, "Shall I smite them? Shall I smite them?" But Elisha did not want revenge; he had used his power only to protect himself from his enemies; and he did not wish to punish them any more. He was willing to forgive all their unkindness to him. So he said to the king of Israel, "No, we must not kill them. God

gave them into my power that I might save myself; but I do not wish to hurt them. Let us give them bread to eat, and water to drink, and send them home to their master." Then Elisha made a great feast for the Syrians; and when they had finished eating and drinking, he let them go back in peace to the king of Syria. How kind and generous Elisha was to his enemies! All God's people ought to be like him. It is very wrong to be angry, and cruel, and revengeful. We may defend ourselves, but we must not *avenge* ourselves. God says, "Vengeance is mine;" and His command to each of us is, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." *Romans* xii. 19, 20.

So the Syrian army went back to their master, and Elisha was left in safety. His enemies could not hurt him. Why? Because God was his friend, and protected him in all dangers. If God is with us, we need not be afraid of man.

Some time after, King Ben-hadad himself came to Samaria, and besieged it. A siege is a very dreadful thing. The poor people in a besieged city cannot come out to get food; and their enemies will not let any be carried in: so the food in the city is very soon gone, and then famine begins. The famine in Samaria now was very dreadful. The people gave much money for very little food, and bad food too. They gave eighty pieces of silver for an ass's head; and were glad to eat this, because they were so very hungry. Some of them ate what was worse. They killed and ate their own little children! One day, the king of Israel was passing by the wall,

and he heard a woman crying, "Help, my lord, O king!" But the king answered, "If the Lord do not help thee, how can I help thee? Have I food to give thee?" Then he turned to the woman, and asked why she cried. The poor woman pointed to another near her, and said, "That woman asked me to give my child, yesterday, for food for her and me; so I took my little son, and we boiled him, and ate him; and she promised to give her own son for us to eat to-day; but when I asked for him, she would not let him be killed. She has hid her child, and now we have no food." The king rent his clothes when he heard this sad story, and turned away from the woman; for he could not bear to hear more.

The king was very unhappy, but he was not humbled in all his trouble. He did not repent of his own sins, and of his people's sins; and he did not ask help from God. No, the king was angry; angry with Elisha, who, he thought, had brought this trouble upon them all; and he said, "Elisha shall be put to death; he shall not live another day." Elisha was sitting quietly in his house with his friends. They were all peaceful and happy, because their trust was in God, and they knew He would take care of them. And so He did; for before Joram sent to take Elisha, to put him to death, God told the prophet of his danger, and helped him to prepare for it. Then Elisha said to his friends, "A messenger is coming from the king to cut off my head. When you hear him, shut the door, and hold him there; for the king his master will soon follow him."

So the door was locked; and when the messenger came, he himself was taken; but the prophet was preserved in safety. God had preserved Elisha many times, and He did not

forsake him now. How happy those people are whom the Lord protects! They need never fear if He is with them.

 CLXVIII.

PLENTY IN SAMARIA.



THE king of Israel soon followed the messenger to Elisha's house; but he did not come now to hurt the prophet. Joram was in despair, for he thought that he, and his people must soon all perish with hunger. But God can send help in the greatest troubles, and He was now going to send help to Israel. So Elisha, at God's command, said to the king, "Hear what God says: to-morrow, flour and barley shall be sold in plenty in Samaria." This was good news for Joram and his people, but they did not all believe what Elisha said. There was a lord with the king, a nobleman of Israel, and the king leaned upon his arm as he stood by Elisha. This lord did not believe that there should be plenty of food in Samaria next day. He thought such a thing was too wonderful even for God to do; and he answered Elisha very disrespectfully, and said, "No, this cannot be; I will not believe it;" he forgot that everything is possible with God. Then Elisha turned to the unbelieving nobleman, and said, "Thou shalt see the food to-morrow with thine eyes, but thou shalt not eat of it." The nobleman did not care

for what Elisha said; but God remembered his sin, and soon punished him for it. And God remembered also His promise to give plenty of food next day to the poor hungry people in Samaria. That night He put fear into the hearts of the Syrians, so that they thought they heard a noise of horses, and chariots, and a great army. There was nothing to make them afraid; all was still; but God could fill them with fear, when no earthly enemy was near to hurt them. So they said one to another, "The king of Israel is coming against us, and all his soldiers, and the king of Egypt is coming too, and many more kings, and very great armies with them; what shall we do?" Then they all arose, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, and gold and silver, and garments, and food; and escaped for their lives. The Israelites knew nothing of this; they were all in the city, sad, and full of trouble; not thinking how wonderfully God was going to deliver them.

By the gate of the city, sat four lepers. They were not allowed to be with other men; they were obliged to keep by themselves, without friends or neighbors to comfort them. These lepers were very hungry; they

had had no food for a long time; and now, they felt so weak and ill, that they thought they must soon die. But God had food to give these poor men, when all their hopes were gone. They said one to another, "Why do we stay here? We must die soon. If we stay here, we must die; and if we go into the city, we must die. Let us go to the Syrians' camp; perhaps they may save us; or if they kill us, we need not care; for it is better to die by the sword, than to perish by hunger; let us go." So they arose, and went to the Syrians' camp. It was God that made them wish to go. Why? Because he had provided food for them there. When the lepers came to the camp, they saw no man; they went into a tent, but no soldiers were in it. Food was there in plenty; and the poor hungry lepers ate and drank, and then they looked round, and saw gold, and silver, and garments in the tent, as the Syrians left them. The men took all these things and hid them; and then they went to another tent, and found more; and they ate and drank there too, and took the gold and silver, and hid them. Then the lepers said one to another, "We must not be selfish, and keep all to ourselves, while the poor people in the city are starving. Let us go and tell the good news to the king's servants." So they went to the man who kept the gates of the city, and told him what they had seen; and the man told the king's servants, and they told the king. It was still night; but the king rose as soon as he

heard the news, and called his servants, and commanded them to go with horses, and seek the Syrians. He thought, perhaps, they might be secretly hidden somewhere: but no; the servants went as far as Jordan, and could not find them. The Syrians had escaped to their own country; and the road was covered with vessels and garments which they had thrown away in their haste. Then the servants returned, and told the king that the Syrians were really gone. So the people of Samaria went without fear to the Syrians' tents, and took away all that was in them; and food was sold in plenty in Samaria that day, as Elisha had foretold.

But where was the unbelieving lord? The king commanded him to stand at the gate and keep it. Multitudes of people passed by, carrying food in plenty; and this lord saw that God had power to do what He promised, and that Elisha had spoken truth. But the great plenty in Samaria did no good to that unbelieving nobleman. He did not live to enjoy it. The crowds of people pressed upon him, and threw him down; and he fell, and was trodden under foot, and died, as Elisha had said. What a sad thing unbelief is! Though people may not believe God, nor care for what He says *now*, they will be obliged to believe and care in another world. They will know *then*, that all God says is truth. All His promises to the righteous will come true, and all His threatenings to the wicked.

CLXIX.

THE SHUNAMMITE'S POSSESSIONS GIVEN BACK.

THE people of Israel were now sinning very much against God. They and their king were idolaters: they did not care for the true God who had done so many wonderful things for them. What sad ungrateful people the Israelites were! But we ourselves are often very much like them. God gives us as many blessings as He gave them; yet how often we forget Him, and love the things of the world better than the things of God! Thus we set up idols in our hearts, and make God angry with us, as He was with Israel and their king.

God said, He must punish his ungrateful people. He told Elisha, He would send a famine upon all the land for seven years. But there were some good people in Israel still, who had not forgotten to love and serve the Lord. The good Shunammite was one. She and her family had not forsaken the God who had been so kind to them, and Elisha did not forget the good woman who had taken care of him many years before. So he went to her and said, "God will very soon send a famine upon the land for seven years. He is going to punish the wicked idolatrous people of Israel. Take thy family, and go away into another country, where they may find food." The woman thanked Elisha for so kindly telling her this; and she called all her family, and went with them to the Philistines' country, and there they stayed seven years.

But God was with the Shunammite's family; and they had His blessing to comfort them still. Wherever we are, if God is with us, we may be contented and thankful. Perhaps we may be obliged to leave our own happy country, and to go to some distant land where God is not known; but His eye can see us there; His hand can keep us still, and His blessing will be upon us, if we love and serve Him. He will say to us, what He said many years ago to Jacob, who was obliged to leave his home, "I am with thee, and I will keep thee in all places whither thou goest." *Genesis xxviii. 15.*

When the seven years of famine were ended, the good Shunammite went to her country again. She felt very glad to return; but when she wished to go back to her own house, and her own possessions, she found that they had been taken away, and given to strangers. Some years before, she had been very rich, and had great possessions; now, she was poor, and had nothing. Rich people very often become poor, and perhaps, like this good Shunammite, have no home to live in. How foolish, then, it is to "trust in uncertain riches," which must be taken away so soon! It is best to have our riches in Heaven, and a possession there which we shall never, never lose.

The good Shunammite did not love her possessions in this world more than she loved her possession in Heaven; but she knew it was just and right that her house and

land should be given to her again ; so she went to the king to ask for them. When she came to the king, she saw a man talking to him. Who was he ? He was Gehazi ; Elisha's former wicked servant. Joram wished to know the wonderful things that Elisha had done ; so he called Gehazi to tell him all he knew. Gehazi had seen many of the miracles which Elisha had done ; and he particularly remembered the beautiful story of the Shunammite's little boy whom Elisha raised to life again. Gehazi was telling this to the king, when the woman herself came in ; for God made her come just at the right time, that the king

might be kind to her, and give her back her possessions. When Gehazi turned round, and saw the Shunammite, he said to the king, "This is the woman, and there is her son whom Elisha raised to life." Then Joram spoke very kindly to her, and asked her if Gehazi had told the truth about her, and about her son. The woman said, "Yes, it is all true. I am the woman whose child died : Elisha raised my child to life, and here he is now, alive and well." Then the king commanded one of his servants to give the woman all the possessions that belonged to her, and sent her away contented and thankful.

 CLXX.

BEN-HADAD'S DEATH.



LISHA was now in Damascus, where Ben-hadad, king of Syria, lived. Ben-hadad was very ill ; and when he heard that Elisha was come, he wished to send to the prophet, and ask if he should recover. So Ben-hadad called one of the great men of Syria, named Hazael, and told him to make a present, and go to Elisha. Ben-hadad felt very anxious to know if he must soon die. Why was he so anxious ? Because he knew he had not served God when he was well, and now he had not God to comfort him when he was ill. He felt it would be very sad to leave his kingdom, and possessions, and riches, and never see them again ; and where could he go for comfort ? Israel's God

was not his god. His idols could not help him, and he knew nothing of the true God. What could he do ? He thought perhaps Elisha might comfort him ; that perhaps his God would tell him whether he should die or live. Death is very dreadful to those who are not ready to die. But if we truly love God, if our sins have been washed away in the blood of Jesus, and our hearts made new by the Holy Spirit, then we are ready, and then we need not fear when sickness and death come.

Hazael came to Elisha, and stood before him, and said, "Ben-hadad has sent me to thee, saying, shall I recover from this disease ?" Elisha answered, "Go, and say to Ben-hadad, thou mayest indeed recover ;

but the Lord has shown me that he shall surely die." Hazael wondered at this message; and he looked at Elisha, and saw that the prophet was weeping. Then Hazael wondered still more, and asked, "Why weepeth my lord?" Elisha answered, "Because I know what evil thou wilt do to my people Israel; thou wilt destroy their houses, and kill them with the sword." Hazael looked very much astonished, and said, "What, can I do this great thing?" Then Elisha answered, "The Lord has told me that thou shalt be king of Syria." So Hazael went home to Damascus, but he did not forget what Elisha had said. Hazael was a very ambitious man. He wanted to be king, though he had no right to the kingdom; and God, who knew Hazael's heart, knew that very soon he would make himself king. Hazael, perhaps, had thought of this a long while; and now the time was coming when he could do it. He went home, and found Ben-hadad still very ill. The king called Hazael, and asked him, "What did Elisha say?" Then Hazael deceitfully answered, "He told me that thou shalt surely recover." Ben-hadad was pleased to hear this. He began to think, perhaps, of all the things he would do when he was well again; he did not care now to prepare to die. He did not know how very near death was; for Hazael did not tell him all that Elisha had said. Hazael told Ben-hadad only half of Elisha's message, and kept the rest to himself. All that day, dreadful thoughts were in

Hazael's heart. What were those thoughts? He was thinking how he could kill his master, and make himself king of Syria. When Hazael began to be ambitious, and to wish for the kingdom, he did not think of doing what was so very wicked. But Hazael did not try to conquer his sinful ambition, and it grew stronger and stronger, and, at last, he was tempted to murder. The next day, when his master was in bed and asleep, Hazael took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water, and laid it upon Ben-hadad's face; and the king was suffocated and died. Hazael had his wish now; he was made king of Syria. But could Hazael be happy? No; he could not have God's blessing, and without that none can be happy. Riches, and possessions, and honors, cannot give happiness.

Hazael was a very wicked man; but remember, that our hearts are like Hazael's, before they are made new by God's Holy Spirit. We are all, by nature, proud, and ambitious, and covetous; and if God's grace prevent not, Satan may tempt us to do things as wicked as Hazael did. Hazael did not at first think of murdering his master. He began by being only ambitious and covetous. Little sins will grow greater and greater, if we do not pray to God to subdue them. Satan will tempt us more and more, if we do not fight against him in God's strength. But if we do pray for help, God promises to give it. He says, He will "subdue our iniquities," and give us the victory over sin and Satan.

CLXXI.

JEHORAM, KING OF JUDAH.



JEHOSHAPHAT, the good king of Judah, was now dead, and his son Jehoram reigned after him.

There were two kings named Jehoram or Joram; one, king of Israel, and the other, king of Judah. They were both wicked. Jehoram, king of Judah, was not like his good father; he was more like the wicked kings of Israel. As soon as he was made king, he put all his brothers to death. He had seven brothers; and when Jehoshaphat died, and Jehoram was made king, all Jehoshaphat's riches had been divided among these brothers. Jehoram had more than they. He had the kingdom, because he was the eldest son; but Jehoram was not contented with this. He could not feel safe and happy while his brothers lived, for he thought that perhaps they might want the kingdom. So this wicked king commanded them all to be killed; and took their riches for himself; and then he thought he might feel safe and strong; but his happiness did not last long. His subjects rebelled against him, and he was not able to subdue them. Why was this trouble sent to Jehoram? The Bible tells us,—“Because he had forsaken the Lord God.” When people forsake God, trouble must come upon them: God will not bless those who forget Him.

One day a letter was brought to king Jehoram. It was a very old

letter. It had been written many years before by the good prophet Elijah. God had told Elijah about this wicked king Jehoram, and all that he would do, and Elijah wrote the letter by God's command. And what was in the letter? A very fearful message from God to wicked king Jehoram. “Thus saith the Lord; because thou hast forsaken me, and worshipped idols, and not served me as thy fathers Asa and Jehoshaphat did, I will send a plague upon thee, and upon thy family, and upon thy people, and upon all that thou hast; and I will smite thee with a dreadful sickness, and thou shalt die.” This was sad news for Jehoram. It all came to pass very soon. God sent enemies to fight against him; and they took away his money, and his children, and carried them into other countries. But still Jehoram did not repent; and, therefore, God punished him again with the dreadful illness he had threatened. Jehoram suffered very much for a long time, and none could cure him. His physicians could not do him any good; medicines could not take away his pain; he had no wife, no children to comfort him; all were gone: and his people did not love him, nor care about him. At last, Jehoram died, and was buried in Jerusalem. But the people did not mourn for him; and they did not honor him at his burial.

CLXXII.

AHAZIAH, KING OF JUDAH.



JEHORAM, king of Judah, left only one son. He was named Ahaziah; and after Jehoram's death, the people made Ahaziah king. He was like his father, very wicked. Ahaziah had been brought up wickedly. His parents taught him what was wrong; "his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly." It is sad for children to have bad parents, and bad teachers, who will lead them into what is wrong. Children's hearts are sinful hearts, loving wickedness better than holiness, and liking what is wrong better than what is right, and, therefore, they learn evil sooner than good; they learn it themselves, they do not need to be taught wickedness, for sin is in their hearts. Kind and good parents try to teach their children what is right and pleasing to God; but they cannot take away their sin, nor give them new hearts. They can only teach their children to pray, and pray for them, that God may forgive, and love, and bless them. Children, then, must pray for themselves, and ask God to enable them to attend to all that their kind friends say.

Ahaziah's wicked mother was named Athaliah. She taught her son everything that was wrong, and

Ahaziah was always ready to do like her. He loved wickedness, and all the friends he chose were wicked like himself. He went with Joram, the wicked king of Israel, to Ramoth-Gilead, to fight against Hazael king of Syria. Joram was wounded by the Syrians, and returned to Jezreel to be cured of his wounds; and while he was lying there sick and ill, Ahaziah went to see him. Both these kings were wicked men; and we may fear that Joram did not care to hear about the things of God in his illness, and that Ahaziah did not want to speak about them. They were not like those happy friends we read about, David and Jonathan. The friendship of Joram and Ahaziah was worldly, wicked friendship; not the friendship which God likes and blesses. Ahaziah went to Jezreel, because he wished to see Joram. This was Ahaziah's reason for going there, but God had another reason for letting him go to Jezreel. God had seen all the wickedness of this king; and He let him come to Jezreel at this time, that he might be destroyed there. Ahaziah had long been living in wickedness; God had seen it all, and now He was going to punish Ahaziah, and his wicked friend Joram too.

CLXXIII.

JEHU MADE KING.



WHILE Joram was still ill at Jezreel, Elisha called one of the sons of the prophets, and gave him a message from God. Elisha said to the young man, "Go now quickly to Ramoth-Gilead. Take a box of oil in thine hand; and when thou comest to Ramoth-Gilead, seek there for a man named Jehu, and call him to thee, and take him into a room alone, and pour the oil upon his head, and make him king over Israel. Then open the door and flee." The young prophet obeyed Elisha directly. He did not wait to ask why, nor murmur at the command. The sons of the prophets were taught obedience. Obedience to God, and obedience to their master Elisha. Young people should always obey those who are over them, without lingering, and without unwillingness. This is Christ's command, "Obey them that have the rule over you." *Hebrews* xiii. 17.

The young prophet went to Ramoth-Gilead, and soon found Jehu. Jehu was a captain of the army, and he was sitting with the other captains when the prophet came to him. Jehu was not thinking about being king; he did not know how God was now going to honor him; but the prophet called to Jehu, and said, "I have a message for thee, O captain." So Jehu arose, and went into another room with the prophet alone. Then the young man took out the box of oil, and poured it upon Jehu's head, and said, "Thus

saith the Lord, I anoint thee king of Israel. Thou shalt smite all the family of Ahab, and punish them for Jezebel's cruelty to my holy prophets. All the family of Ahab shall perish, and the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel in Jezreel." Then the prophet opened the door, and fled. Jehu wondered, perhaps, to hear all this; but he went quickly back again to his friends, and sat down. They all wanted to know who the young man was who had called Jehu; and one asked, "Why did that mad fellow come to thee?" Jehu answered, "Do not you know?" They said, "No, we know nothing; tell us why he came." Then Jehu said, "He anointed me king over Israel in God's name." Did the captains wonder very much? Yes; but they were all willing to have Jehu for their king; for God made them willing. They all arose, and took their garments, and put them under Jehu, upon the top of the stairs; and they blew the trumpets, and shouted, "Jehu is king." Jehu told the captains to keep the secret from the people in Jezreel; and then he rode in his chariot, and went to Jezreel, where Joram and Ahaziah were still staying. The watchman upon the tower in Jezreel saw Jehu coming, but he did not know at first who it was; so he went and told the king; and Joram sent a horseman to meet the chariot. When the horseman came up to Jehu, he said, "The king asks, is it peace?" But Jehu answered,

"What hast thou to do with peace?" Then another messenger came to ask, "Is it peace?" But Jehu answered as before. The watchman on the tower looked very attentively, and said to Joram, "The messengers who went to meet the chariots, do not return; and the man in the chariot drives like Jehu, for he is driving very furiously." When Joram heard this, he commanded his servants to make his chariots ready, and he and Ahaziah rode to meet Jehu. When they came near, Joram cried, "Is it peace?" But Jehu answered, "What peace can there be while thy wicked mother Jezebel is living?" Joram began to be frightened, and cried out to his friend Ahaziah. But Ahaziah could not help Joram now. The time was come when both these wicked kings must be punished for their sins, and none could save them. Jehu drew his bow with all his strength, and shot an arrow into Joram's heart; and the king fell down dead in his chariot. This happened in Jezreel, near the place where Naboth's vineyard was, and where Naboth had been so cruelly stoned. Then Jehu said, "Take Joram's dead body, and throw it into the field of Naboth; for I remember that God said to Ahab, when Naboth was killed, Here will

I punish Ahab for shedding Naboth's blood." So they cast Joram's dead body into the field, as Jehu commanded.

Where was Ahaziah? He did not live long after his wicked friend's death. Jehu smote him in his chariot; and the wounded king fled to Megiddo, and died there. This was the sad end of these two wicked kings. And why did they die in this dreadful way? Because they had sinned against God, and served idols, and rebelled against His holy laws. God had not forgotten Ahab's sins. He had not forgotten the murder of Naboth. God cannot forget sin which is unrepented of. Ahab had not repented, Joram had not repented, Jezebel had not repented; and, therefore, punishment came upon them all. What a dreadful thing sin is! And does not God punish sin now? Yes; not, perhaps, as He punished Ahab's sins. People may live many years in wickedness, and die at last quietly in their beds;—not as Joram and Ahaziah did. But has God forgotten their sin? No; He has written all in His book of remembrance; and, if not before, these wicked people must be punished for their sins when they die, and be cast away from God for ever.

CLXXIV.

AHAB'S FAMILY DESTROYED.



THE wicked queen, Jezebel, was in Jezreel; and when she heard that Jehu was come, she made herself ready to see him. Jezebel was very bold, and hardened in her sins. She had no fear of God; she cared for nothing but her own pleasures, and vanities, and sins. And now Jezebel dressed herself very finely, and painted her face, and looked out of the window of her house to see Jehu. Jehu looked up at the window; and when he saw Jezebel, he cried to the people who were in the room with her, "Who will help me?" Two or three servants looked out of the window directly, and Jehu said to them, "Throw Jezebel down." The servants were willing to obey Jehu, for they did not love their cruel, wicked mistress; so they took her up, and threw her out of the window; and her blood was sprinkled upon the walls, and upon the horses; and Jehu trod her under foot, and she died. Jehu now went into the house, and ate, and drank, and rested himself. But when he had finished, he said, "Go now, and see this cursed woman, and bury her; for she is a king's daughter." So some of the people went to the place where Jezebel fell, to take up the body. But what did they find? Only her head, and her feet, and part of her hands. All the rest of the body was gone. Where was it gone? The wild hungry dogs had eaten it. They had torn it to pieces, and devoured the flesh, and

broken the bones; and none could know the dead body now, nor say, "This is Jezebel." The people, who looked at the dreadful sight, went to Jehu again, and told him what they had seen. Then Jehu remembered what God had said, so many years before, by Elijah the prophet, "The dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel in Jezreel, where Naboth died."

Wicked Ahab, and Jezebel, and Joram were now punished for their sins, as God had said; but many of Ahab's children still lived; and God had said that all that wicked family must be destroyed; none must be spared. Jehu knew this. God had commanded him to punish Ahab's family, and Jehu obeyed the command. Ahab's sons were all at Samaria, with the great men of the city, who brought them up. These great men were afraid of Jehu. They had heard what he had done to Joram, and Ahaziah, and Jezebel; and they said, "We cannot resist Jehu; it is best to submit to him." So they wrote a letter to Jehu, and said, "We will be thy servants, and do all thou shalt command us." Jehu was pleased with this; and he wrote back to the great men of Samaria, and told them to bring the heads of Ahab's sons to Jezreel the next day. As soon as the men had read the letter, they took the sons of Ahab, and killed them all; and cut off their heads, and put their heads in baskets, and sent them to Jehu, at Jezreel. When Jehu heard that his command was obeyed, he said to the

messenger, "Lay the heads in two heaps, by the city gate." Next morning, Jehu went out, and stood by the gate, and said to all the people, "See here the heads of Ahab's sons. I slew Joram; but who slew all these; Remember what God said by Elijah the prophet,—that all the family of Ahab must be destroyed. God's word is truth."

Then Jehu went to Samaria, and

there he met the brothers of Ahaziah. Jehu destroyed these wicked men too; and then all Ahab's family were dead, and all Ahaziah's.

Destruction is the punishment of sin. It is sad to think of these poor men perishing by the sword; but it is still more sad to think of their souls perishing for ever. How dreadful must be the punishment of sin in the next world!

CLXXV.

THE LITTLE KING SAVED.



HO was the king of Judah after Ahaziah's death? When Athaliah, the wicked mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she destroyed all the king's sons, and made herself queen. Ahaziah's youngest son was then a babe; he could not take care of himself, but God took care of him; and this little child was saved when all his brothers were killed. His aunt, Jehoshabeath, hid him and his nurse from wicked Athaliah, and brought him home, and kept him in safety in God's house for six years. The babe's name was Joash. How sad it was for little Joash to live in a time of such trouble and danger! He had no father, no mother, no brother, to take care of him. But God was the friend of Joash, and He could make Jehoshabeath kinder to him than his own mother. The husband of this good aunt was named Jehoiada; he was a priest of the Lord. Jehoiada lived in the temple, and little Joash and Jehoshabeath lived there too.

Joash was better taught here than if he had been brought up in the palace. Jehoiada and Jehoshabeath loved God, and they tried to make the little boy love Him. They taught him to read God's word, and to sing God's praises. Children are never too young to begin to love God. Jesus wishes them to come to Him, and is always willing to receive and bless them. He says now, as He said when He was upon earth, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." Those are happy children who have kind friends to bring them up in the fear of God. It is better to have good friends who love God, than rich friends who love the world. Little Joash was happier in God's holy temple, than he could have been in Athaliah's fine palace.

Athaliah ruled over Judah. She was not the right sovereign; and Jehoiada and Jehoshabeath remembered God's promise to David, that David's children, for many generations, should sit upon the throne of Judah; and these good people trusted in God to make little Joash king

when the right time should come. They knew God could keep this poor helpless child safe from cruel Athaliah. And God heard their prayers for little Joash; and taught Jehoiada what to do, and gave him wisdom for the work. When Joash was seven years old, Jehoiada thought the right time was come to make him king. But Jehoiada could not do this alone; so he called the captains, and the Levites, and many of the people of Judah, and asked them to help him. And Jehoiada did not forget to ask help of God; for he knew that he could do nothing rightly without God's blessing; so he prayed for strength to do his duty to his country and his king. Then Jehoiada assembled all the people in the temple, and there they made a covenant together. The good priest spoke to them, and said, "Joash, the king's son, shall reign. God has promised that David's sons shall sit upon the throne of Judah; Joash has a right to the throne, and not Athaliah, who has had possession of the country so long. Let us trust in God, and He will help us to make Joash king. Divide yourselves now into three companies. Some must stand at the doors, and some at the king's house, and some at the gate. Let the priests and Levites come into the house of God, and let the people stand round to keep watch without." So Jehoiada armed the captains and the people, and placed them all round the temple, to guard the young king. Then they brought Joash into the house of the Lord, and put the crown upon his head; and Jehoiada anointed him, and said, "God save the king; and all the people shouted for joy, and cried

again, "Joash is king." Athaliah heard the noise of the people running, and shouting, and rejoicing, and wondered why it was—she knew nothing about Joash; she thought he had perished with his brothers, many years before. So Athaliah ran in haste to the house of God; and there she saw Joash standing, as king, by a pillar, and all the princes and people blowing the trumpets, and shouting, and rejoicing, and singing praises. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, "Treason, Treason!" But Athaliah had no friends to help her now. Jehoiada called the captains; and they ran to Athaliah and took her out of the house of God, and put her to death. She deserved to die, for she had murdered many of her son's family, to make herself queen; and she was justly punished for her wickedness, and put to death herself. Punishments will always come upon murderers at last.

Joash was now king, and could reign in peace. What care God had taken of this little child, all the six years he had been hidden from his cruel grandmother! Why did God care so much for Joash? Because God remembered His promise to David. God loved David, and He loved David's children after him, and promised to give them the kingdom of Judah. And God loved Judah, and would not let His people suffer any longer under cruel Athaliah. He waited some years, but all those years He was watching over Joash, and over His people in Judah too; and when the right and best time came, He gave wisdom, and strength, and courage, to Jehoiada, that he might

make Joash king, and slay wicked Athaliah. How wise and good God is! we may trust all to Him. Ourselves, and our friends, and our country—all are in His keeping;

and if we love Him, and trust in Him, as Jehoiada did, we may know that all will be well, and not fear any dangers, nor difficulties, nor troubles.

CLXXVI

JOASH, KING OF JUDAH.



JOASH was a little boy when he began to reign;—only seven years old. Kings have many duties to perform which are very difficult and very troublesome; and they need great wisdom to perform these duties rightly. Children seldom have so much wisdom as older people; and if they trust to their own knowledge, they always do what is foolish, and ignorant, and even wicked. But God will give wisdom to every child who asks Him for it. This alone will help young kings and all young people, whether rich or poor, to do what is truly right and wise. God gave young Solomon wisdom, and Joash too, when they began to reign. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." *Psalms cxi. 10.* These young kings both reigned in the fear of the Lord; and this was their wisdom. It was a happy thing for Joash that he had his good uncle to teach him and advise him. Young people always need advice, and they ought to be very thankful and very attentive to the kind and good friends who give it to them. Joash did right all the time Jehoiada lived, because he attended to what that good priest told him.

The house of God had been sadly

broken up by the wicked queen Athaliah; and now Joash wished very much to repair it. But Joash knew this would cost much money, more than he could give: so he called the Levites and told them to go all through the country, and ask the people to give money to help to build up God's house. But the Levites were not so anxious about this holy work as Joash was. They were very slow, and took a long time to collect the money. This was not right. When we have work to do, good work, work in God's service, we should do it directly, and as quickly as we can. "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." *Ecclesiastes ix. 10.*

Joash was displeased to see his people so slow. He called Jehoiada and said, "Why are the Levites so long in collecting money for God's house? Tell the people to bring their money to the temple; and we will put a box by the door of the temple, and the money shall be thrown in there." So Jehoiada took a box, and made a hole in the top of it, and put it by the door of the house of the Lord; and all the people were told to bring their money,

and to cast it into this box. The people were very glad to do this; they did not want to keep their riches for themselves, but were willing and joyful to give much of it to God. The box was soon full; and then the Levites opened it, and counted the money, and emptied the box, and put it in its place again. The money was given to the carpenters, and masons, and workmen, who repaired the house of God, to pay them for their work. When all was finished, the Levites brought the rest of the money to the king and Jehoiada. Then Joash commanded that all this gold and silver should be made into holy vessels for the service of God; because the money all belonged to God. The temple was now repaired; and the people went to it every day, to offer

their sacrifices, as God commanded. Let us learn to be as generous, in giving our money in God's service, as the good people of Judah were. We have boxes now to hold money for holy purposes; to send out missionaries to heathen lands; and to buy Bibles and Testaments; and to build churches and schools, where idolaters may learn about Jesus. The money in these boxes is all for the service of God; and if we love God, we shall be as glad to contribute as the people of Judah were. Rich people would throw in a great deal, if they truly loved God; and poor people would try to throw in a little. All would give something; and they would give it joyfully; for God does not like unwilling offerings. "God loveth a cheerful giver." *2 Cor. ix. 7.*

OLXXVII.

JEHU'S REIGN.



HEHU was still reigning in Samaria. When he came there he slew all who were left of Ahab's family.

God's word by Elijah was now fulfilled. God never forgets His threatenings to His enemies, nor His promises to His friends. What a fearful thing it is, then, to have Him for an enemy; and what a blessing to have Him for a friend!

Jehu called all the people together, and said to them, "Ahab served Baal a little, but I will serve him much. Call all the prophets and servants of Baal to me. I am going to make a great feast and sacrifice

to Baal, and I shall put to death all who do not come." Then all the people who worshipped Baal in the land of Israel, made themselves ready, and came to the sacrifice in the house of Baal. The house was full from one end to the other, with these wicked idolaters. Then Jehu told his servants to bring robes for all the worshippers of Baal, and the servants obeyed. Jehu did all this deceitfully; he did not really worship Baal; he only pretended that he served him. Why? Because he wished to deceive the idolaters, and to bring them together that he might slay them. Was all this

right? It was right to destroy Baal, but very wrong to do it so deceitfully. Deceit can never be right in any thing. All we do ought to be done in truth and sincerity.

When the worshippers of Baal were gathered together, Jehu sent to see that none of the Lord's servants were among them; for only Baal's people were to be there. Then Jehu called a great many men, and told them to stand outside the house. The people within were offering their sacrifices, little thinking of the danger that was so near to them. Then Jehu commanded the men to rush in, and slay all the worshippers of Baal, and not let one escape. It was a dreadful sight. The soldiers ran into the house of Baal, with their swords in their hands, and smote every one there; men, and women, and children; all perished in their sin! Then the men broke down Baal's house, and destroyed the images, and burnt them; so there were no worshippers of Baal left in Israel. This was well, but the people had idols still. They worshipped the golden calves that Jeroboam had put in Bethel and in Dan. And Jehu had his idols too. He had done many things that were right. He had obeyed God's command about Ahab's family, and he had destroyed the worship of Baal; and Jehu was very proud of the good

things he had done, and boasted about his zeal for the Lord. But Jehu was not a true servant of God. He had never repented of his sins, nor prayed for a new heart, nor served God with all his strength. He served God a little; but he served the world, and his own pleasures and his sins much more. Could God love and bless Jehu? No; for He wants *all* the heart, and love, and service of people; not only a part of them, but all. Those cannot be the children of God, who pretend to honor Him, but do not really love Him.

Many people now are like Jehu. They talk about God, and say they are His servants, and pretend to be very anxious for His honor, and perhaps boast of the good things they do. But all the time these people's hearts are not right. God looks there. Their neighbors can see only what they do, and what they say; God knows what they feel, and what they think. If they, in heart, love the world more than they love God, they are not really His people; and they cannot deceive Him. We ought to pray as David did, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." *Psalms* cxxxix. 23, 24.

CLXXVIII.

THE END OF JOASH.



WHEN Jehu died, his son Jehoahaz reigned over Israel. Jehu loved the world; and God gave him, and his sons after him, worldly honors and worldly possessions. But Jehu and his children did not care for heavenly things; and, therefore, they had no possessions in that world which will last forever.

Joash was still king of Judah; but his kind friend, the good priest Jehoiada, was dead. He lived to be a very old man, 130 years old. He had served God many years, and done much good in Israel, and all the people loved and honored him. Jehoiada was glad to go to his rest in Heaven, where he could praise and serve God better than he could on earth. His death was a happy thing for him, but it was a sad thing for Joash and his people. They had lost the kind friend who used to teach them what was right, and to warn them when they did wrong; and when Jehoiada was dead, they soon forgot the holy things he had taught them. They grew tired of serving God, and went to their foolish idols again, and worshipped them. Did Joash let his people do these wicked things? Yes; Joash encouraged them in their sin; for he also had forgotten God, and all his early wishes to love and serve Him. When Jehoiada died, all the goodness of Joash died too.

Jehoiada's son, Zechariah, was still living, and he was grieved to see the king and his people doing

so wickedly; and God was angry; and He sent holy prophets, to tell them so; but the people would not attend. At last Zechariah himself went to speak to the king and the people. He was a good man; God's Spirit was upon him, and he felt that he ought to be bold, and to speak the truth to his king. So Zechariah went to Joash, and spoke very solemnly to him and to the people. Zechariah said, "Why do you disobey God's holy commands? You cannot prosper now. When you were obedient to God, you had His blessing, but now you have forsaken Him, and He has forsaken you." Was Joash willing to attend to Zechariah? Did he repent, and turn to God, and tell his people to throw away their foolish idols? No; Joash had become hardened in sin; he no longer cared for God, nor for Jehoiada, nor for Zechariah. He was angry with that bold and faithful man, and encouraged the people to conspire against him; and the good priest was slain in the temple of the Lord. Zechariah did not try to defend himself, when he saw his murderers coming to kill him. He submitted quietly to the cruel command of Joash; but as he lay wounded and dying, he said, "God sees, and He will punish;" and then he closed his eyes, and died. And God did see this wicked, ungrateful act; and he did punish Joash for it. The Syrians came, and destroyed many of the princes of Judah, and took away their riches. God first sent the Syrians

to punish Joash ; and then he smote him with dreadful diseases. Joash had enemies without ; and, in himself, he was sick, and in pain, and in trouble. He had no friends. God was not his friend ; for Joash had forsaken God, and therefore God forsook him. His servants and his people were not his friends ; they could not love him, because he was so cruel and so ungrateful. The priests and prophets were not his friends ; for he had driven them all away, and they could not come to see him now. Joash lay upon his bed alone, without a friend to comfort him. His body was in pain, and his mind too. When he thought of his sins,—his ingratitude, his cruelty, his forgetfulness of God, he must have felt miserable indeed. Once he had been happy ; he had friends to love him, and God to bless him, and all was well then. But now he had lost all. Why ? Because he had forsaken God. And then came the end of Joash. A very dreadful end it was. His own servants conspired against him and killed him in his bed ! God had seen Zechariah's death, and now He was avenging it. Joash was justly punished for his murder ; though his servants were very wicked to kill their king.

We may learn something from this story. There are many people now, we may fear, very much like Joash. Children are often brought up, as he was, in the fear and love of God. Kind parents and friends teach them what is right, as Je-

hoiada taught Joash ; and, perhaps, the children attend, and are pleased with what is taught them ; and their teachers hope that they are really beginning to love and serve the Lord. But, after a time, these kind friends die, perhaps, or are taken away. The young people are sorry to lose them, as sorry as Joash was when old Jehoiada died ; and they think, "We will never, never forget what our kind friends taught us, but always remember them and love them." And perhaps they do remember them for a little time ; but soon they begin to trust in their own power and goodness, forgetting how weak and sinful they are ; they neglect to pray to God, and to ask Him for help and strength ; Satan tempts them to be careless about holy things, and they do not resist him. They love the world more and more, and God less and less, every day. And, at last, they forget all that their kind friends taught them ; they do not like to remember it, and they are angry with those who kindly warn them, as Zechariah warned Joash. What must be the end of these young people ? If God in mercy does not make them repent and turn to Him, their end must be as sad as the end of Joash. They may not be killed in their beds, as he was ; but they will die, as he died, without comfort, without hope. Pray to God to keep you. Say to Him, "My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth." *Jeremiah* iii. 4.

CLXXIX.

A M A Z I A H.



MAZIAH, the son of Joash, reigned now in Judah. The first thing he did was to kill the servants who had killed his father.

And this was right, for they were wicked murderers and the Bible tells us, that murderers must be put to death. Then Amaziah gathered together a large army from Judah, and hired some men of Israel to help him to fight against his enemies. But a prophet came to Amaziah, and said, "Let not the army of Israel go with thee; for God is not among them: and, if they go, He will make thee fall; for He has power to help, and to cast down." Then Amaziah said, I have hired the men of Israel, and paid them; what shall I do for the money?" Amaziah loved money too much. Money can do us no good without God's blessing, and if we have God's blessing, we need not care for money. The prophet told Amaziah this. He said, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than that money." So the king obeyed, and sent away the army of Israel. The Israelites were very angry; but God's blessing was upon Judah, and therefore they had no need to fear Israel's anger.

Amaziah smote the Edomites, and took away their idols, and brought them to Jerusalem; but there he bowed down to these new gods, and worshipped them. God had given him power to conquer his enemies; yet he showed no gratitude, no love to God, for all His

mercies. The prophet came to Amaziah to warn him about his sins. He said, "Why hast thou sought these new gods? Can they deliver thee? Can they save thee?" But Amaziah had grown so wicked, that he did not like to be reproved; and he was angry with the prophet who spoke to him. When the prophet saw that Amaziah did not like reproof, he said no more; but one thing he told him, as he was going away, and a very fearful thing it was. He said, "I know that God will destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and not hearkened to my reproof." If Amaziah had attended humbly to the prophet, he might have been saved; but now it was too late. Solomon says, "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." *Proverbs* xxix. 1. Learn to attend to the reproof of wise and kind friends, and to be thankful for it. "He that heareth reproof, getteth understanding." *Proverbs* xv. 32.

Soon after this, Amaziah sent to the king of Israel, and told him he wished to fight with him. Jehoash was now king of Israel; he was son of Jehoahaz, and grandson of Jehu. Israel's army was stronger than Judah's. Jehoash knew this, and advised Amaziah not to come to a battle. He said, "Abide quietly at home: why wilt thou come and fall in the battle; thou and Judah with thee?" This was wise advice; but Amaziah was so obstinate and self-willed, that he attended no

more to the advice of Jehoash, than he had to the reproof of the prophet. God had left Amaziah to himself; for this foolish king had forsaken God; he would have his own way, and now, it was bringing him to destruction. Jehoash soon conquered Amaziah; and then went to Jerusalem, and broke down the walls, and took away the gold and silver from the temple, and from the king's house, and carried all to Samaria. Thus Amaziah suffered for his self-will; but all his sorrows and sufferings did not make him repent; he still lived in forgetfulness of God, attending to his own

pleasures and will, and not doing the will of God. At last, his people made a conspiracy against him, and Amaziah was slain. See how dangerous it is to forsake God, and to choose our own ways, and not His ways! Pride and self-will brought destruction upon Amaziah. Learn then, from him, to be humble, and willing to attend to advice and reproof. Our own way must end in destruction. It may please us for a little time, but it will never take us to Heaven. "There is a way which seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." *Proverbs xvi. 25.*

 CLXXX.

THE DEATH OF ELISHA.



AS Elisha still alive? Yes; but he was now an old man, and very near death. Many years before, his dear master had been taken away from him; and now Elisha was soon going to join him again, in that happy world where friends part no more for ever. King Jehoash went to see Elisha when he was ill. Jehoash was not a good man; but he loved and honored Elisha, and this was right. The king knew how useful Elisha had been to his country; and he was very sorry to lose him, and wept over him, and cried, "Oh my father, my father." Israel had suffered much from the Syrians; and Jehoash feared that now he should have no kind friend to help and comfort him. But Elisha wished to teach the king, that God could

still protect Israel, and fight their enemies for them. The prophet taught Jehoash this by signs. He gave the king a bow and arrows, and put his hands upon the king's hands, and told Jehoash to open the window eastward. Jehoash opened it, and the prophet said, "Shoot." Jehoash shot the arrow out of the window, as Elisha told him; and then the prophet explained to Jehoash what the sign meant. He said, "This is the arrow of the Lord's deliverance from Syria. Thus shalt thou smite the Syrians, and destroy them." Then Elisha told the king to take the arrows again, and smite upon the ground. Jehoash did so; but he smote only three times upon the ground, and then stayed, without waiting for Elisha's command. This made the prophet angry. He

saw that Jehoash had no faith in God, no trust in Him, no care to obey His commands; and he said to the king, "Thou oughtest to have smitten many times; then Syria should have been quite destroyed; but now thou shalt smite Syria only three times."

The Syrians had long troubled Israel. Hazael was king of Syria, and he was cruel to the Israelites, as Elisha had prophesied that he would be. But after Hazael was dead, Jehoash conquered the Syrians three times, and got possession again of the cities they had taken. Yet Jehoash smote the Syrians only three times. Why? Because he was so impatient, and had so little faith, when Elisha, at God's command, told him to smite upon the ground. It is wrong to grow tired of obeying the commands of God. We must persevere in what we have to do. Like Jehoash, we have enemies to fight; and stronger enemies than the Syrians. Who are these enemies? Satan, and the world, and our own wicked hearts, and sinful passions and tempers. These are very strong enemies indeed. How can we conquer them? Not with bows and arrows, and swords, and spears. We must ask God to fight for us. We must look in faith to Jesus Christ, and ask Him to give us the victory. But we must not be like Jehoash, soon tired of praying and fighting against these enemies. We must not resist them

two or three times only, and then leave off. If we do this, our enemies will soon conquer us. No, we must fight and pray every day we live; because every day Satan and our own sinful hearts try to overcome us. And if we persevere, we shall conquer at last; for God promises the victory to all those who fight trusting in His strength, and not in their own. "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us." *Romans* viii. 37.

Good Elisha died, and was buried. All his troubles and sorrows were ended, and his happy soul went to join his dear master in Heaven. Soon after Elisha's death, the Moabites came to invade the land. One day, as some Israelites were burying a dead man, they looked up, and saw the Moabites coming. The friends of the dead man took up the body in haste, and threw it into Elisha's tomb; for they were so much afraid, that they could not stay to bury it. But a wonderful thing happened when the dead man was put down into the tomb. As soon as the body touched the bones of Elisha it revived; and the man lived again, and stood upon his feet. There was no power in Elisha's bones to revive the man. It was God who did the miracle; and He showed the people by it, how much he loved His faithful servant, and honored him after his death.

CLXXXI.

JONAH'S DISOBEDIENCE.



A**F****T****E****R** the death of Jehoash, his son Jeroboam reigned over Israel. He was a very wicked man, as wicked as the other kings of Israel who had reigned before him. God had long punished Israel with many troubles; but He still loved His people; and now He looked upon their sorrows and pitied and saved them by Jeroboam; not because Jeroboam pleased Him, but because He was so merciful that He would not destroy Israel.

A prophet was living in Israel at this time, named Jonah; and God commanded him to go with a message to the city of Nineveh. Nineveh was a very large and rich city in Assyria, and a great many people lived in it; but, unhappily, Nineveh was a very wicked city. The king and the people worshipped idols, and not God. They were proud of their greatness, and of their riches; but they thought nothing about Him who gave them all they possessed. We may fear, that there are many great cities now, very much like Nineveh; cities full of fine houses, and buildings, and carriages, and beautiful things, and busy people, buying and selling, and making money; thinking only of worldly business, and worldly pleasures; and that they care nothing about God, and Heaven, and their own souls.

God told Jonah to go to Nineveh, and warn the people of their sins, and tell them how angry He was. But Jonah did not like to obey.

Why not? Was he not glad to be useful, and to do the work which God gave him to do? No; he liked his own ease better than being useful. Perhaps he thought the journey would be very long and troublesome; or he was afraid the Ninevites might be angry with his message, and try to kill him. These were very sinful feelings. When God gives His people a command, they ought to obey it directly, whether it pleases them or not. God's pleasure ought to be His people's pleasure too. And when we are doing the will of God, we need never fear any danger; we may trust all to Him, and not be afraid.

But what did Jonah do? He would not go to Nineveh; but he arose directly and went to Joppa; and there he found a ship just going to a place called Tarshish. Jonah was very glad when he saw the ship. Perhaps he thought, "This is what I wanted: I will go to Tarshish in that ship; and then I shall be far away from Israel, and from the God of Israel, and He will give me no more messages to take to Nineveh." So this rebellious prophet paid the fare to the captain, and went into the ship, and sailed away. Jonah thought he was safe now, and far away from God; but he forgot that God is everywhere. His eye can see us wherever we are; we cannot hide from God. "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord?" *Jeremiah* xxiii. 24.

CLXXXII.

THE STORM.

GOD had seen Jonah's disobedience, and He was going to punish it. He let Jonah go into the ship, and sail away; but He was looking at him all the time; and now, when the ship was in the sea, and Jonah thought all was safe, his trouble began. Trouble always follows sin. When we do wrong, we must suffer for it. We cannot disobey God without making Him angry; and then He punishes us for our sin.

How did God punish Jonah? He sent a great wind and storm upon the sea; the ship was blown about, and tossed upon the waves; the sky was black with clouds, and the lightning flashed, and the thunder roared very fearfully. All the sailors were frightened. They threw their goods into the sea, to lighten the ship, for they did not care for any thing they possessed now; they thought only how they could save their lives. And then these poor sailors began to pray for deliverance; but they did not know the true God, who ruled the sea, and sent the storm. They all prayed to their own gods; idols which could not hear, nor help, nor save them.

But where was Jonah? Did not he pray? He knew the true God. Did he now ask for pardon for his disobedience, and pray that God would quiet the storm, and save the poor frightened men? No; Jonah knew nothing about the storm; he

had gone down to the bottom of the ship, and there he lay asleep. The noise of the storm did not frighten him; the cries and prayers of the sailors did not wake him. God had sent the storm to punish Jonah; and yet Jonah knew and cared nothing about it. Why was this? Because Jonah was so hardened in his sin, that he did not care to think whether God was angry or not. Jonah's sleep was not that peaceful happy sleep which God gives to His own obedient people. Those people who have God's smile upon them, may sleep safely in any danger; they need not fear, for God's hand is over them to keep them. But Jonah's sleep was not like theirs. He slept in carelessness and rebellion against God. But God in mercy spared His disobedient prophet. The shipmaster came to Jonah, and awoke him, and said, "Why sleepest thou? Arise, and call upon thy God; and pray to Him to save us, that we perish not." Jonah arose directly, and when he saw his danger, he began to feel frightened. He knew why the storm came, but the sailors did not; and so they said, "Let us cast lots that we may know why this storm is come upon us. Perhaps one of us has done something wrong, and this danger is sent to punish him. We will cast lots, and find who the wicked man is." So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. God made it fall upon him, that all the sailors might know his sin; and

that Jonah himself might feel and confess it. When the sailors saw that Jonah had the lot, they said all to him, "Tell us now the truth; why is this evil come? What hast thou done? Who art thou? Where is thy country? Who are thy people?" Jonah felt how much he had sinned, and was very sorry: and he did not try to deny, but humbly confessed all the truth. This was right. When we have done wrong, and are sorry for it, we should at once confess it humbly. So Jonah said, "I am an Israelite; I am a servant of God, the true God, who made the dry land, and the sea, and who has now sent this storm; and I know he has sent it to punish me, because I have disobeyed His command, and tried to flee from His presence." Then the sailors asked, "What shall we do? How can we make the sea quiet again?" Jonah said, "You must take me, and throw me into the sea; and then it will be calm. I know the storm is sent for my sake, and it will not be calm while I am in the ship." Jonah was willing to bear the punishment of his sin himself, and did not like the poor sailors to suffer for his sake; but they were very kind to him, and for a long while would not cast him into the sea. They rowed very hard, and tried to bring the ship to the land; but they could not. God had determined to punish Jonah, and He would not calm the storm while he was in the ship. Jonah told the sailors this, and asked them again to throw him into the sea. Then they all prayed to God, the true God, and asked Him to forgive them for

what they were going to do. They said, "Lord, Thou hast done as it pleased Thee. We do not wish this man to perish; we cast him into the sea, because he tells us it is Thy will. Do not punish us for his death." Then the men took up Jonah, and threw him out of the ship into the sea; and he went down into the waters, and the men saw him no more. But as soon as the disobedient prophet was out of the ship, the wind and the storm were calmed; and thus God showed the ignorant sailors how great His power is. He showed them that it was He who sent the storm, and why He sent it. He made them feel that He is a holy God, who sees sin, and punishes it; not like their idols, which had no power to see nor to do anything. And when the sailors looked now at the quiet sea, and the bright sky, and saw their ship sailing on safely through the water, they felt that God is merciful as well as just. They knew that the God who sent the storm to punish a rebellious sinner, took away the storm when that disobedient man was thrown out of the ship. The sailors felt all this, and began to fear the Lord, and to love Him too.

The Bible tells us no more about this ship, and the men who sailed in it. The dreadful storm was sent in mercy to them, to turn their hearts to God; to teach them that He alone can make, and see, and do all things; that He must punish sin; but that He is always ready to have mercy, and to forgive those who truly turn to Him.

CLXXXIII.

JONAH SAVED.



AS Jonah drowned in the waves? No; God punished His disobedient servant for his sin; but He loved him still. He wished Jonah to feel his wickedness and repent; but He did not wish him to perish. When Jonah felt himself sinking deep into the sea, he had no hope that he could be saved; but God could help Jonah, when Jonah could not help himself; and He helped him now in a very wonderful way. God had prepared a great fish to save him; and when Jonah was thrown into the sea, the fish was ready to receive him. It opened its mouth, and swallowed him; and he went down alive into the body of the fish. But God would not let this great fish destroy Jonah, nor hurt him at all. God kept him alive. The fish went down to the bottom of the sea with Jonah; and there he lived, in the fish, three days and three nights. What could he do in his trouble? He did what all people ought to do in trouble, he prayed to the Lord. He confessed his sin, and asked for pardon. He prayed for deliverance; for he felt that only God could save him now. And did God hear Jonah's prayers? Yes; Jonah was not too far off for God to hear. God attended to his humble cry, and spoke to the fish, and it cast out Jonah upon the dry land. How surprised, and how thankful, Jonah was now! How glad he was to feel himself upon dry ground again, and

to see the bright sun shine, and the trees, and grass, and flowers; and to walk about in comfort, as he used to do! Jonah praised God for this mercy. And when we have been sick and near death, and God raises us up again, let us remember to be, like Jonah, humble and thankful, and ready to give ourselves anew to God.

But had God forgotten Nineveh! No; He still remembered His command; and He called Jonah again, and said, "Arise, go to the great city Nineveh, and preach the preaching that I tell thee." Did Jonah obey? Yes; he was humbled now. He had learnt how foolish and dangerous it is to rebel against God, and to flee from Him; he knew that if he wanted God's blessing, he must obey God's command; so he arose directly, and went to Nineveh. It was a long journey; but Jonah did not care for this, because he was ready and willing now to go where God sent him.

God's ministers, in our days, often go to very distant countries to preach the gospel. They have many troubles, and many difficulties. The countries where they go are wicked countries, like Nineveh. The people who live there know nothing about God; they are ignorant idolaters. And perhaps these poor idolaters do not want the missionaries to come to them. Very often, they like their ignorance and their sins, and do not wish to be taught better. Perhaps

they may not attend to the missionaries; perhaps they may hate, and persecute, and kill them. How can missionaries like to go to these wicked countries? Why are they willing to leave their happy homes, and their dear friends, and go away to heathen lands? Because God has commanded them, as He commanded Jonah, to go and preach

the preaching that He tells them. God does not speak to His ministers now by a voice from Heaven; but He speaks to them in His Bible. They read there what Christ said to His disciples, just before He went up to Heaven, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" and they rejoice to obey their Saviour's command.

CLXXXIV.

NINEVEH SPARED.



WHEN Jonah came into the great city of Nineveh, he cried, and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." This was God's message, and a dreadful message it was. The people who heard it were very much frightened; for they knew that it came from God, and that God was very powerful, and could soon destroy them if He pleased. What could the Ninevites do? Their fine city could not help them; soon all must be thrown down. Their riches and possessions could do them no good; soon they would all be gone too. What could they do? Only one could save them now; only God Himself; so the Ninevites determined to go to Him in their sorrow. The king first gave the command. He told the people to eat no food, and to drink no water; but to keep a fast all through the city, and to put on sackcloth; these were signs of mourning; and then, he commanded them all to cry unto God, and to turn from their wickedness, and to pray for pardon.

Were the Ninevites right in doing this? Yes; wicked countries, and wicked cities, and wicked people should all do as these Ninevites did. God is angry with sinners now, as He was then. He tells them in the Bible, if they do not repent they must perish, perish for ever in hell. What can sinners do when they read this dreadful warning? Is there no hope? Will God never forgive them? Must they die, and be sent away from God, and Heaven, and happiness for ever? No; God does not say this. He tells sinners to repent, and turn to Him; and then He promises to forgive. But how can sinners turn to God? They must pray humbly to Him; and look in faith to Jesus Christ who died to save them, and ask to have their sins washed away in His blood, and their hearts made new by the Holy Spirit. And will God hear these prayers? Yes; He promises to hear, and to forgive. He says, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will

have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." *Isaiah* lv. 7.

The Ninevites did this. They turned from their wicked ways, and sought the Lord. And He saw their tears, and their prayers, and their sorrow for sin, and said in His great mercy, "I will spare Nineveh; I will not destroy it now." How

happy they must have felt then, and how thankful to their kind and merciful God! And God is still merciful to sinners. He says to them in the Bible, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; why will ye die?" *Ezekiel* xxxiii. 11.

CLXXXV.

THE GOURD.



AS Jonah glad that God spared Nineveh? No; the Bible tells us, "It displeased Jonah, and he was very angry." He prayed; but Jonah's was a wicked, discontented, rebellious prayer; a prayer which could not please God. He said, "I knew Nineveh would be saved. I said so when I was in my own country, and therefore I fled to Tarshish. Why was I sent here? Why was I commanded to say that Nineveh would be destroyed in forty days? O Lord, take away my life; it is better for me to die than live." What a sad temper this showed in Jonah! He loved himself, and his own ease and honor, better than he loved the poor people of Nineveh! He was angry, because God was merciful! Jonah asked to die; but was he ready to die then? Could he go to Heaven with this selfish unholy temper? God knew how wicked Jonah's heart was; and, in mercy, He did not answer this foolish prayer; but

He said to Jonah, "Doest thou well to be angry?" Then Jonah went a little way out of the city, and there he made a booth, and sat down under it. The climate of Nineveh was hot; and Jonah felt the heat very much, as he sat in his booth. But God was so kind to his discontented servant, that, in the night, He caused a gourd to grow up over Jonah; a shady plant to be a shelter over his head. God made this plant come up in one night; and the next day Jonah sat under it in comfort, and was very glad of the gourd. How kind God was! But there was no kindness in Jonah. He was all selfishness, and discontent, and ingratitude. He sat under his gourd, angry with God, because He had spared Nineveh. Jonah loved himself very much; but he cared nothing for all the thousands of people in that great city. He did not thank God for His mercy in giving him the gourd, nor feel gratitude for it; so God took it away from him. God prepared a

worm, the next morning, to eat into the root of the gourd; and when Jonah looked at his gourd again, he found it withered and dead. The sun shone very brightly; and God sent a hot east wind, and the heat was very great, and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah; for there was no gourd to shelter him now; and he began to faint, and asked again that he might die. Then God spoke to Jonah very kindly and gently. He told him of his sin, his wicked selfishness about Nineveh. He said to him, "Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd? Dost thou think so much about this little plant, and nothing about Nineveh? Thou hast much pity for the gourd, which only lived one day, and then perished; and shall not I

have pity upon Nineveh, that great city, where there are more than 60,000 persons? Is the gourd worth more than they?"

The story of Jonah ends here. We may hope that he repented of his sin, and humbly asked for pardon; and that he tried afterwards to conquer his wicked temper. Learn from the story what a sin selfishness is. How wrong it is to love ourselves, and our own ease and our own pleasure, more than we love the souls of our fellow-creatures! Pray to be kind, and affectionate, and full of love to all; and to be always ready to do them good, and to rejoice when they are happy. St. Paul says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." *Philippians* ii. 4.

 CLXXXVI.

KING UZZIAH.



ZZIAH was now king of Judah. He was only sixteen years old when he began to reign; and like Joash, this young king reigned at first very well. He sought the Lord, and asked help from Him; and God heard his prayer, and enabled him to do right. There was a good man living in Judah then, named Zechariah. He was a prophet; and God taught him by visions, and gave him understanding in holy things. And Uziah served God all the time this good prophet lived.

God blessed Uziah. He gave him strength to subdue the Philis-

tines, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites; and everything that Uziah did went on well. Why was this? Because the young king was seeking God in all he did. When Uziah began anything new, he first asked God's help and blessing; and God heard his prayer, and directed him aright. Try, like Uziah, to seek the Lord. Wherever you go, whatever you do, first ask God's blessing; and then all will go on well, and you will be happy and prosperous too. If you look to God for help, He will teach and guide you. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." *Proverbs* iii. 6.

Uzziah did many things in his kingdom. He built towers, and digged wells. He had very much cattle; and a large army of soldiers to fight his enemies, and shields, and swords, and spears, and bows. He made engines for shooting arrows and great stones; and all the people who lived near wondered when they heard of his strength, and riches, and power. All this was very pleasant to Uzziah; but his prosperity did him no real good; it led him away from God. Like Solomon, he grew forgetful of God when he grew rich. He became proud of himself, and of his power, and his greatness; not remembering that all he had, God gave him. Uzziah, in his pride, thought he might do as he pleased; and he went boldly into the temple of the Lord, to burn incense there. This was very wrong. The king was not the right person to burn incense: it was the business of the priests alone. When the priests saw Uzziah going into the holy place, they followed him, and said, "It is not right for thee, Uzziah, to burn incense. God has told the priests, that they alone may burn

incense; go out of this holy place; do not disobey the command of God." Uzziah was angry with the priests, and would not attend to them: but God Himself punished him for his sin. How did God punish Uzziah? He smote him with leprosy while he was in the temple. The priests looked at the king while he was standing by the altar, and saw this dreadful leprosy rising in his forehead; and then they quickly took him out of the temple; for no leper might stay in that holy place. Uzziah himself was in haste to go out, when he felt how God had smitten and dishonored him for his sin. He lived in a house alone, and was not allowed to come into the holy temple. Uzziah had been very proud; now God humbled him, and made him feel how weak and helpless he was. He could not judge his people himself, nor attend to his kingdom; his son Jotham did all for him; and when Uzziah died, Jotham was made king. Learn what a sin pride is. Solomon says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." *Prov. xvi. 18.*

CLXXXVII

THE LAST KINGS OF ISRAEL.



HO was reigning now in Israel? Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam, the second. We read very little about him. He was a wicked man, and an idolater, like all the other kings of Israel. God had promised Jehu, that his sons should reign in Israel till the fourth generation; and God remembered this promise. Four of the family of Jehu reigned after him; we have read something about them all. Their names were Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam, and, lastly, Zechariah. The promise of God was now fulfilled, and He allowed no more of this wicked family to reign in Israel. Shallum made a conspiracy against Zechariah, and killed him, and reigned himself. But Shallum was slain a month after, by Menahem, in Samaria, and then Menahem was made king. He, too, was very wicked. God did not now bless His people and their kings; for they had forgotten Him, and served new gods, and were growing worse and worse, more and more wicked every year. But God, in mercy, still spared them. He did not destroy them; but often He sent troubles to punish them for their sin. The king of Assyria came with an army against Israel. Menahem did not wish to fight; so he demanded money from all his people,

and gathered together a great deal of silver, and gave it to the king of Assyria, and asked him not to fight against Israel. So the king of Assyria took the money, and went home to his own country.

After Menahem's death, another wicked king reigned in Israel, Pekahiah, the son of Menahem. But after two years, Pekah, his captain, conspired against him and killed him; and then Pekah became king. He was a very wicked man, and his reign was a sad time in Israel. A new king of Assyria came, and took a great many cities, and carried captives many of the Israelites. After this, a man named Hoshea made a conspiracy against Pekah, and killed him, and made himself king. Hoshea was the last king of Israel. We shall soon read the story of the end of the kingdom, and the captivity of the ten tribes.

How dreadful it is to live in a country where God is not feared nor worshipped; where the people think only of their riches, and their pleasures, and do not care about holy things. We ought to be thankful that we are in a country where God is worshipped and feared: but there are many, who, like the Israelites, do not care for the holy things they are taught, and will not attend to the Bible, nor to God's faithful ministers.

CLXXXVIII.

THE PRISONERS SENT HOME.

JOTHAM, king of Judah, was a very good king. He did right; but his people went on in their own wicked ways, and did not wish to be like him. This must have troubled Jotham very much; but he trusted in God, and sought comfort in Him, and God strengthened and blessed him. Jotham built a great many cities in the mountains of Judah, and towers and castles in the forests. Then he fought with the Ammonites and conquered them; and Jotham prospered in all he did, because "he prepared his way before the Lord his God." We may learn something from the history of this good king. We have not kingdoms to rule, nor cities to build, nor battles to fight, as he had; but we all have some work, some business to do; and when we begin this work, we ought, like Jotham, to ask God's blessing. We should pray God to keep us from beginning any thing wrong, and to help us in doing what is right. Then, all we do shall prosper; we shall be active and busy, but we shall remember that we are the servants of God, and try to please Him in all things. "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." *Rom. xii. 11.*

After Jotham's death, Ahaz, his son, was made king of Judah. Ahaz was not like his father; he was a very wicked man. Ahaz worshipped images, and the gods of the heathen nations, and sacrificed

to them, and burned his children in the fire before these idols. God, for this dreadful wickedness, soon punished him. The king of Syria came and fought against Ahaz, and took many of the people prisoners, and carried them away to Damascus. And some were slain by Pekah, king of Israel, and others were taken captive to Samaria. But there was then in Samaria a good prophet, named Oded, and when he saw all these poor people from Judah brought into the city, he felt sad. Why? Because Judah was a part of God's people as well as Israel. Israel and Judah were brethren; they ought to have been kind one to the other—friends, not enemies. And though God was angry with Judah, Oded knew that He loved His people still, and would be angry with Israel for taking them prisoners. So Oded went boldly to the army of Israel, and said, "God has given the children of Judah into your power, because they have sinned against Him. You have slain some of them and taken many more, and brought them as prisoners here. And now you are going to make slaves of them; you show them no love, no pity. Why are you so cruel to these poor people? They are your brethren; and though they have sinned too, remember that you have sinned too. Now, attend to me, and send home these prisoners, whom you have taken captive, and do not make God angry with you." Some of the nobles of

Israel attended to the good prophet, and said to the soldiers, "You shall not bring the prisoners here. We have sinned very much already; do not let us sin still more." So the soldiers left the prisoners, and all the riches they had taken, before the princes and the people. Many of these prisoners were without clothes; and some were very weak and sickly; and all were hungry, and wanted food. But the kind princes gave these poor people clothes, and shoes, and food, and water. Then the princes took those who were weak and sickly, and put them upon asses, and gave them all they wanted for their journey, and sent them away. Where were they going? Home to Judah, to their own country. The princes carried all the prisoners as far as Jericho, and then returned to Samaria.

Ahaz was pleased to have his people back again; and the kind princes and the good prophet must have felt very happy too; for it is always pleasant to do what is kind, and to make others happy. The Bible tells us to love one another; to be kind, and gentle, and forgiving. "God is love," and he commands His people to live in love. He has shown wonderful love to us in sending His dear Son to die for us, and "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1 *John* iv. 11. And Jesus Christ has shown wonderful love to us in bearing the punishment of our sins, that we may be saved if we believe in Him. Then let us walk in love, "as Christ hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God." *Ephesians* v. 2.

 CLXXXIX.

COMFORT IN TIMES OF SORROW.



HE troubles of Ahaz were not yet ended. Many more enemies came to fight against him, and Judah suffered very much.

Why was this? The Bible tells us; because Ahaz "transgressed against the Lord." Punishment must always follow sin. Ahaz, in his troubles, did not seek comfort from God. He asked the king of Assyria to help him, and sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, and said, "Perhaps they will help me." But Ahaz only made God more angry by worshipping them. "They were the ruin of him and of all Israel." Sin must

ruin people at last, if they do not repent, and turn away from it. But Ahaz did not repent, and turn from his sins. He grew worse and worse. He took out the holy vessels from God's house, and cut them in pieces; then he made new altars, like the idol altars of Damascus, and offered offerings upon them, and burnt incense to the gods of Assyria, and shut up the holy temple of God in Jerusalem.

Had the people no good prophets to teach them better? Yes, there were many holy men in Judah then. Hosea, and Micah, and Isaiah, were living at this time. These good men

tried to keep the people from wickedness, but very few would attend to them. How grieved the prophets must have felt when they looked around and saw how very wicked their country was! But God comforted them. He taught them by His Spirit that happier times were coming. He taught them to prophesy of the Lord Jesus Christ, who would come into the world to save sinners; and of that future time when His Gospel should be made known to all the world. Many of God's holy prophets wrote much about Jesus; but Isaiah wrote more about Him than any of the others. He prophesied when Ahaz was king of Judah. He said, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." *Isaiah* ix. 6. Who was this wonderful child? The Lord Jesus Christ. He was God and man too; the mighty son of God, and yet He became a poor babe, and lay in a manger. He came into the world to make peace for us; to bear the punishment of our sins; that God might smile upon us, and forgive us for the sake

of His dear Son, if we believe in Him. Isaiah wrote about all these things many years before they happened. Ahaz did not care for them, and the unbelieving people of Judah did not care for them; but it was a great comfort to Isaiah, in all his troubles, to think of the happy time that was coming. When we look around, and see so much wickedness, perhaps we may often feel unhappy; but the word of God can comfort us, as it comforted Isaiah. The Bible tells us that a very happy time is still coming, happier than any time before. This world will not be then as it is now. People will not then be ignorant and forgetful of God. There will be no idols worshipped then; all will love and honor, and serve the only and true God. "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." *Hab.* ii. 14. Perhaps we may not live to see this happy time; but if we are God's people, that need not make us sorry; for if we die before, we shall go to a better and happier world, where there is no sorrow, nor pain, nor sin; and where all tears are wiped away.

CXC.

THE CAPTIVITY OF THE TEN TRIBES.

THE time was now coming when God must punish rebellious Israel more dreadfully than He had ever punished them before. Many years before, God had given Jeroboam the ten tribes, and promised that if he would obey and serve Him, the kingdom of Israel should belong to Jeroboam's children for many generations. But Jeroboam and his sons disobeyed God, and then they were destroyed, and the kingdom was given to others. The new kings were as wicked as Jeroboam, and therefore they were destroyed too. All this was a warning to Israel, to teach them how God punishes sin; but they did not attend to the warning. The kings and the people grew worse and worse. They forsook God, and made idols, and worshipped them. God spared these wicked people a long time, for He wished them to repent, and turn to Him. Sometimes He sent His holy prophets to teach and warn them; but the people would not attend. Sometimes He sent enemies to fight against them, to punish them for their sins. The people of Israel were often in great trouble, and then they went to God for help, and prayed Him to deliver them; and He very often heard their prayers, and saved them from their enemies. But when the danger was past, then Israel forgot their kind God, and went back to their sins and their idols again. They had done this,

many times, and now God said, He would spare them no longer, but take away their kingdom, and send them captives into a distant land.

When Hoshea was reigning, Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came to Samaria, and besieged it three years. At last, he took the city, and carried away the people who were in it to Assyria, and put them in the cities there. Samaria was left without any inhabitants; but Shalmaneser sent some of his people from Assyria, and placed them in Samaria, and they lived there, and possessed it, while the poor Israelites were far away from their own home. These new people who lived in Samaria, knew nothing of the true God. They were idolaters, and at first they worshipped only the idols they had worshipped in Assyria. God soon taught them how powerful He was. He sent lions among them, and the lions killed many of the people. Then the people began to be frightened, and they said to the king of Assyria, "We do not know the God of this country; we have been worshipping our own gods, and have made Him angry, and He has sent lions to slay us, because we do not serve Him; but we do not know how to serve Him; what must we do?" Then the king of Assyria sent to them one of the priests who had been carried captive from Israel, and said, "He will teach you how to serve the Lord." So the priest of

Israel came from Assyria, and lived at Bethel, and taught the people to fear the Lord. Was he glad to come back? Perhaps he was; but when he looked around, and saw his country possessed by strangers and idolaters, and thought of his own people who were captives in a distant land, he must have felt sad.

Did the new inhabitants of Samaria give up their idols, and worship the true God with all their hearts? No; they learned a little about God, but they did not truly love Him, nor rightly understand how to serve Him. They said, "We will worship Israel's God, and our own gods too." Then they built altars, and made priests, and offered sacrifices, sometimes to God, and sometimes to their idols; and they offered their children to these idols, and burnt them in the fire. This worship was very displeasing to God. He must have all the heart, all the service, all the love of His people. He will not bless those who think they may serve God and idols too;—God and the world; God and their sins; God and their own foolish pleasures. Many people

think they may do this now, as the inhabitants of Samaria thought; but the Bible says, no, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." *Matt. vi. 24.*

Did the ten tribes ever return to Canaan? No; years passed away, generation after generation died, and still the Israelites were far away from their own beloved home. They stayed in distant lands; they were scattered over many countries, to warn nations, and to teach them how fearful it is to displease God. Many long years the people of Israel have been without a home, and without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without God's blessings, and without the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Where are they now? They are scattered in many parts of the East; in Egypt and in Persia, and in many other countries, we know not where. But God has not forgotten them. His eye has been upon them all these years; He has kept them apart from the nations where they live, and preserved them in all their dangers, and sorrows, and troubles.

CXCL

H E Z E K I A H .

HEZEKIAH was now king of Judah. He was son of Ahaz, but he was not like his father; Hezekiah was a holy man. When he began to reign, the kingdom of Judah was in a sad state. The holy temple of God was shut up; idol altars were in all the high places; incense was burnt to new gods, and sacrifices offered to them, and not to the Lord, the true God. Ahaz had done this; but Hezekiah began to undo it all directly, for he knew it was his duty, as king, to teach and command the people to serve God. So first, Hezekiah called together the priests and the Levites, because it was their business to take care of God's temple and service, and of the holy things. He spoke very solemnly to the priests and Levites, and yet very affectionately, like a kind father. Rulers and governors ought always to be kind and affectionate to those they are set over. They must be strict, but they may be gentle and loving too. It is best to do all things in love.

Hezekiah said, "Hear what I am going to tell you. Our fathers forsook God, and worshipped idols, and shut up the holy temples, and burnt no incense, and offered no sacrifices to God. All this has made Him angry, and He has sent trouble and sorrow upon Judah, to punish His people for their sin. Now let us return to God, and serve

Him with all our hearts. You are the priests of the Lord. He has chosen you to offer sacrifices to Him, and to burn incense. Now then, arise and serve Him. Put away these idols, and let us make a covenant with our God, and then we shall have His blessing, and His anger will be turned away." The priests and Levites attended to what their good king said, and willingly obeyed him. They went directly to the house of God, and cleansed it, and took away all the idolatrous things, and destroyed them. Among these things was the brazen serpent which Moses had made in the wilderness. The people honored this serpent, and burned incense to it. There are people now in many countries as foolish as the people of Judah. The ignorant heathen give to dumb idols honor and worship which belong only to God. Thus they disobey the commandment which says, "Thou shalt not make any graven images; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them." Hezekiah commanded the brazen serpent to be taken away; and he broke it in pieces, to show the people it was only a piece of brass without power to help them.

Then the Levites brought back the holy vessels which Ahaz had taken away, and put them in the temple again. All was now ready; the temple was cleansed, the altars, and the tables, and the shew-bread, and the holy things, were in their

right places. Then Hezekiah rose very early in the morning, and called the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the Lord. Why? Because they were going to offer sacrifices there; to confess their sins, and to pray for forgiveness. They brought bullocks, and rams, and lambs, and goats, for a sin-offering for the kingdom; and Hezekiah commanded the priests to offer all these animals on the altar of the Lord. Then the priests killed the bullocks and the lambs, and the rams, and sprinkled the blood upon the altar. Afterwards, they brought the goats, and laid their hands upon them, confessing the people's sin, and killed them, to make atonement for all Israel. But why was this? Could these animals do any good? Could their blood atone for sin? No; it had no power. "It is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins." *Hebrews x. 4.* The people knew this. They looked in faith to Jesus, who had long before promised to come into the world, to offer himself as a sacrifice to take away sin. He could atone for sin, and He alone. And when God saw the faith of Hezekiah and his people, He accepted their sacrifices, and forgave them.

There was great joy in Judah at this time. The Levites played, and sang psalms of praise to God; and all the people sounded the trumpets, and shouted for joy; and good Hezekiah rejoiced too, when he saw his people praising and serving God. What made them all so happy? Why did they rejoice? Because they had received God's pardon and God's blessing. They were not happy before. Sin makes people miserable. When God's frown is upon them they cannot be happy, they have no right to rejoice. They have no real joy, no true peace then.

And how can sinners be made happy? As Judah and Hezekiah were made happy. We need not, indeed, offer sacrifices now, as they did. The one great sacrifice, of which all the other were types, has been offered. Jesus Christ was that sacrifice, and we want no more. But we must come to Him in faith, confessing our sin, and feeling how weak and helpless we are, and we must ask Him to have mercy upon us. Then God will hear, and forgive, and bless us, as He did the people of Judah; and we may rejoice as they did, and praise Him for all His goodness.

CXCL.

THE PASSOVER KEPT.

THE next thing Hezekiah did was to call all the people to keep the Passover. We read about the Passover a long time ago.

Why was it kept? It was in remembrance of that wonderful day in which God brought His people Israel out of Egypt. God then sent an angel to destroy the first-born of all His enemies; but the angel passed over the doors on which the lamb's blood was sprinkled, and did not destroy those within. God commanded His people to keep the feast of the Passover every year. They were to kill and eat a lamb, as they had done the night they left Egypt, and to remember God's mercy and kindness to them. But the people of Israel and Judah had long forgotten this command. They had not kept the feast of the Passover for a great many years. This was very wrong; and Hezekiah told them how wrong it was, and commanded them now to come to Jerusalem, and keep the Passover again. He wrote letters, and sent them through all his kingdom, and into Israel also. The posts went from tribe to tribe, and from city to city, through the land. Were the people willing to come? Some were very glad to come; but others refused, and laughed at Hezekiah's command, and would not attend to it. These were wicked, thoughtless people, who did not care for God and holy things. Many people now

are like these careless Israelites. Very often when God's ministers call sinners to attend to holy things, and to think about their souls, and God, and Christ, and Heaven, they turn away, and will not listen. How wicked such people are! When they come to die, they feel how dreadful it is to know nothing of God, and not to be ready when He calls them away.

But the people of Judah, and some of the people of Israel, attended directly to Hezekiah's letters, and came to Jerusalem to keep the feast of the Passover. Then the Levites killed the lamb for the people, and the priests sprinkled the blood, and Hezekiah prayed for his people, and said, "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God." And God did pardon all those who sought Him in truth. The Passover was another type of Christ. The blood of the lamb saved the Israelites from the destroying angel. Christ is our passover: He was sacrificed to save us from worse destruction—from perishing for ever in hell.

The people kept the feast seven days; singing, and praising the Lord, and rejoicing, and making confession before God. And good Hezekiah blessed them all, and spoke comfortably to the Levites who taught the good knowledge of the Lord. Did they go away when the seven days were ended? No; they felt so happy in God's service,

that they all wished to stay seven days more. Then they rejoiced again, and praised the Lord every day ; all Jerusalem was full of joy ; holy joy, not foolish mirth, but true happiness, because they were serving God, and He was blessing them. At last the days of the feast were all ended, and the people went home. They were sorry to go ; they were not tired of serving and praising God, but they had families and business at home, and they knew it was their duty to attend to them. They were "not slothful in business," though they were "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." So they returned, praising God, who had heard and accepted their prayers, and given them His blessing. "Their voice was heard, and their

prayers came up to His holy dwelling place, unto Heaven."

How happy those people are who serve the Lord with all their hearts ! God's service ought to be our greatest pleasure. When we are praising Him, we are doing what happy spirits do in Heaven. But we cannot now serve God as we should wish. We often grow tired and weary ; and we have worldly business, and cares, and troubles, which prevent us from praising God as we ought to do. But in Heaven, we shall praise Him for ever. We shall never be tired there. All then will be praise for ever and ever. "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." *Revelation* iv. 8.

CXCIII

SENNACHERIB'S ARMY DESTROYED.



WE have been reading about Hezekiah's happiness, now we must read about his troubles. All people in this world must have trouble sometimes ; God's people, and wicked people too. But when God sends trouble to His people, He sends it in love. He sends it to teach them to trust in Him more, and to love Him more ; and He can comfort them in all their sorrows, and deliver them if He please.

But what was Hezekiah's trouble ? There was a king of Assyria, named Sennacherib. He was a very wicked man, and a very ambitious king, and he did not like Hezekiah to

enjoy his kingdom in peace. Sennacherib wished to take possession of Judah, and to reign over it himself. So he made ready a large army, and sent it against Jerusalem, with Rabshakeh his captain. When Hezekiah saw the army coming, he sent some of his great men out to speak to Rabshakeh, and ask him why he was come. Then Rabshakeh told them his master's message, and a very wicked message it was. "Thus saith the great king of Assyria ; I am come to this land to destroy it. Who can deliver you from my hand ? Can the king of Egypt ? Do you trust in him ? He has no power to help you. Does your king Hezekiah

tell you to trust in God? Does he say, the Lord will deliver you? Do not attend to Hezekiah. God cannot deliver you. I have fought against many nations, and conquered them. Their gods could not save them; and how can your God save you? Attend to me; serve me, and do not hearken to Hezekiah." The men of Judah heard Sennacherib's message, but they made no answer; for Hezekiah had told them not to give an answer to Rabshakeh, but to come back directly. When Hezekiah heard the message, he was very much troubled. He rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, as signs of his great sorrow. But Hezekiah knew where to find help. Where did he go? Did he ask the king of Egypt to help him? No; Hezekiah could not trust in him. Did he go to his soldiers, and make them ready for battle? No; Hezekiah knew that they alone could have no power against the great Assyrian army. Where did he go? He went into the house of the Lord, and told all his troubles to God. Hezekiah knew that God was stronger than Sennacherib, and that He was his friend, and could hear his prayer, and deliver him from his enemies.

When Hezekiah had prayed to God, he sent to the good prophet Isaiah, to ask for advice from him. Hezekiah's messengers came to Isaiah covered with sackcloth, and full of sorrow. They said, "Thus saith Hezekiah, This is a day of trouble and sorrow. The king of Assyria has sent Rabshakeh to speak blasphemy against God. But it may be, the Lord will hear the wicked words of Rabshakeh, and deliver

His people; and we ask thy prayer for those who are left." God had told Isaiah what to say to Hezekiah; he had a message of comfort for these poor, sorrowful people. Isaiah said, "Tell your master not to fear the words of Rabshakeh. God Himself will deliver you from this great army. The king of Assyria shall not hurt Jerusalem; he shall not shoot an arrow there, nor come against it with shields. God will defend the city and smite the Assyrian army, and make their king return to their own land; and there he shall fall by the sword." Then the messengers returned, and told Hezekiah what Isaiah had said; and Hezekiah believed in God, and trusted all to Him, and was comforted. And was the army of Assyria destroyed? Yes; but not by Hezekiah, nor by his soldiers, nor his people. They all waited quietly that night for God to deliver them. And, in the night, God sent out His destroying angel to the army of the Assyrians. These wicked men were all asleep in their camp, little thinking of the punishment that was coming. They did not care for God; they laughed at His power, and at His people, and thought they were safe, and feared nothing. But while they were lying asleep in their camp, the destroying angel came down from Heaven, and went from tent to tent, and smote all the soldiers of that large army; 185,000 were slain, without time to repent and ask for pardon!

The people of Judah arose in the morning, and looked towards their enemies' camp. What did they see? No cruel enemies were there now;

no wicked Rabshakeh speaking blasphemy against God. All was quiet. The bodies of the Assyrians were lying dead upon the ground; their souls were gone to appear before the great God whom they had despised and blasphemed. Sennacherib himself returned to his own country, but he did not live there long. Soon after, when he was worshipping in the temple of his idol god, his sons rushed in, and smote him, and killed him. What a sad end of Sennacherib and all his army! How dreadful it is to despise God, and rebel against him! He will, sooner or later, punish all His enemies. They cannot always resist His power. He will say to them at last, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish;" *Acts xiii. 41*; and send them away from His presence for ever.

CXCIV.

HEZEKIAH'S ILLNESS.

SOON after God had delivered Hezekiah from the Assyrian army, the good king became very, very ill; so ill that he thought he must soon die. The kind prophet Isaiah came to him, and said, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." This was a solemn message. Hezekiah felt this: and when Isaiah told him to prepare for death, he "turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord." Hezekiah was ready to die. He had long loved and served God; his sins had been washed away, and his heart had been made new. Was he afraid to die? No; but when he thought that death was so near, he felt that he wanted strength and comfort, and he knew who alone could give them. When he had been in trouble and difficulty before, he had sought God in his house. But Hezekiah could not go there now; he thought he should never go to

God's temple again. But God was with Hezekiah still, and could hear his prayers on a sick bed, and comfort him there as He had done in the temple. Hezekiah wept very much when he prayed. Was he sorry to die? He could not be sorry to leave a wicked world, and go to his home in Heaven; but, perhaps, he was sorry when he remembered his kingdom, and the people whom he loved so much, to think that, after his death, they might have a king who would not teach them rightly, and that they might fall into sin and idolatry again. Hezekiah had been very useful. He had done much good in Judah, and he wanted to do more. God's people should be willing to go, and their friends willing to part with them, whenever this is God's will. Hezekiah wept, but he did not murmur. He was ready to submit to God, and left all to Him. And did Hezekiah die? No; it pleased God to spare his life. God

had more work for him to do, and He told him by the prophet Isaiah, that He would add to his life fifteen years. This message surprised the king very much; he did not disbelieve God's promise, but he wanted to be still more assured of it; so he asked Isaiah, "What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the Lord again?" Isaiah answered, "God will give the sign upon yonder sun-dial. Shall the shadow there go forward ten degrees, or shall it go back ten degrees?" Hezekiah said, "Let the shadow go back ten degrees." Then Isaiah cried to the Lord, and asked Him to give this sign to king Hezekiah. And God did as he asked. The king looked at the sun-dial, and he saw the shadow on it moving; but the shadow did not move forward as usual. It went back ten

degrees, and then it stopped upon a degree it had passed long before. Why was this? How can we understand it? We cannot. It was a miracle which God alone could do; and He was pleased to do it now, to strengthen the faith of Hezekiah, and to convince him that the God who could bring back the shadow on the dial, could bring Hezekiah back also to life and health again.

Hezekiah was now well, and the first thing he did after his recovery, was to go to the house of the Lord. There he thanked his merciful God who had so wonderfully healed him, and gave himself up again to His service. When we are raised from illness this is what we should do. First, thank God who has healed us, and then ask Him to help us to love and serve Him better than we did before.

CXCV.

HEZEKIAH'S PRIDE.



HEZEKIAH wrote a beautiful song of praise after his recovery, thanking God for His great mercy.

All the people of Judah rejoiced when they saw their king restored to them again; it was a time of great joy in Jerusalem, and other people rejoiced too in his recovery. The king of Babylon wrote letters to Hezekiah, and sent him a present. Hezekiah was pleased to see the messengers of the king of Babylon. He was very kind to them, and gave them all they

wished, and showed them his possessions; his gold, and silver, and armor, and houses, and everything he had. Was this right? It was right to be kind and hospitable. The Bible tells us to be so. But Hezekiah felt very proud when he showed his riches to the messengers of the king of Babylon, and that was wrong. He wanted them to praise him, and to go home and tell their master what a great king Hezekiah was. That was pride; it was love of the world, and of worldly things, and worldly praise. We are

commanded not to seek the praise of men, but the praise of God; not to seek to please men, but to please God. Hezekiah did not please God now.

The messengers went away; and, perhaps, Hezekiah soon forgot his sin; but God had not forgotten it. He had seen all. He had looked into the heart of Hezekiah when he was showing his riches to the messengers, and had seen there all Hezekiah's pride and foolish vanity; and now, He was going to punish his sinful servant. One day, Isaiah came to see Hezekiah; but he did not look upon Hezekiah as he used to look. Then Isaiah asked, "Who were those men who came to Jerusalem? From whence came they?" Hezekiah answered, "They came from a very distant country, from Babylon." Isaiah asked again, "What have they seen in thy house?" Perhaps Hezekiah began now to feel his sin, and to be ashamed of it, but he did not try to deny, or excuse it. He confessed directly, "I have shown them everything in my house." Then Isaiah said, "Hear the words of the Lord: Very soon, all the riches which thou hast laid up, shall be taken away to Babylon, and thy sons shall be carried captive, and they shall be servants to the king of Babylon." This was the punishment of Hezekiah. He had loved his riches too much; God would soon take them all away. He had proudly shown his possessions to the messengers of the king of Babylon; the king of Babylon would one day come, and carry those possessions to his own country, and take Hezekiah's children there as helpless prisoners. How foolish it is to

trust in earthly things, and love them so much! They cannot always stay with us; and perhaps we may lose them very soon. It is best and wiser to have our riches and possessions in Heaven. We can never lose our heavenly treasures; they will last for ever.

Hezekiah felt his sin, and submitted humbly to the punishment. He asked for pardon, and for grace to help him to be humble, and to love the world less, and God more. And God in mercy heard his prayer, and told him, that evil should not yet come upon the land of Judah. This comforted Hezekiah, and he thanked God and said, "There shall be peace and truth in my days." This story ought to teach us how weak and sinful we all are. Hezekiah was a good man; but when he was left to himself, when he trusted to his own strength and goodness, he forgot to ask for God's grace, he began to sin directly. Our hearts are full of pride, and of every other sin, which God alone can help us to subdue. Jesus Christ says, "Without me ye can do nothing." *John* xv. 5.

The fifteen years passed away. They were happy and prosperous years; but they soon ended, and then the time came when Hezekiah must die. And he was willing to die now; he did not wish more years added to his life. He had had enough of the world, and was glad to leave its sins, and follies, and vanities, and to go to his home in Heaven.

We do not know when we shall die. God has not told us, as He told Hezekiah, how many years longer we shall live. Perhaps we may live

fifteen years, or more; perhaps we may die this year. We cannot tell. But are we ready to die? Have our sins been repented of, and forgiven? Have our hearts been made new by God's Holy Spirit? Do we love God better than all the world, and are we trying to serve Him in all we do? If not, we cannot be ready to die, and this is a very awful thought. Death may come in a

moment; and where will the soul go then, if it is not prepared for Heaven? Seek, like Hezekiah, to be ready for death. Seek now, not next year, nor next month, but *now*, because death may come very, very soon, and it may be too late to repent and pray then. The Bible says, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." 2 *Corinthians* vi. 2.

CXCVI.

M A N A S S E H.



MANASSEH, Hezekiah's son, now reigned over Judah. He was not like his good father; he was an idolater, and built again all the idol-altars which Hezekiah had thrown down. He worshipped the sun, and moon, and stars; he burnt his children in sacrifice to idols, and set up an image in God's holy temple. The people of Judah soon learnt to do as Manasseh did, and all the country became again full of idolatry, and rebellion against God. God warned Manasseh and his people: He spoke to them by his prophets; but this wicked nation would not attend to the warning. Then punishment came; all those troubles of which Isaiah had spoken to Hezekiah. The king of Assyria sent, and took Manasseh prisoner, and bound him in chains, and brought him to Babylon.

Manasseh now felt how dreadful it is to sin against God. He thought of all his past sins; his wicked

idolatry, and forgetfulness of the true God. And then, perhaps, he remembered his good father, and all the holy lessons Hezekiah had taught him many years before. Manasseh had not then cared for the things which Hezekiah loved so much. He had been, perhaps, a rebellious, disobedient child, and had given his kind father much trouble and sorrow. But Hezekiah had often prayed that God would have mercy on his son; and now, after so many years, when Hezekiah was in his grave, God answered his prayers. Manasseh repented in his captivity. His sorrows brought him to God. "When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him." And did God hear Manasseh's prayer? Yes, God is so merciful, that He will hear and pardon all who truly repent. He casts out none who come to Him, if they believe in Him. God heard and blessed Manasseh. He delivered

him from his trouble, and brought him home to his own kingdom again; and Manasseh reigned in peace in Jerusalem. He did not reign now as he had reigned before. Manasseh had learnt "that the Lord He was God;" so he took away the idols, and threw down the altars, and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel. The last part of Manasseh's life was happy. Why? Because Manasseh was

at peace with God, and had His blessing.

Amon, Manasseh's son, reigned now in Judah. He worshipped idols, as his father had done at first; but Amon did not, like his father, repent of his sins, and humble himself before God. He grew worse and worse; and at last his servants conspired against him, and slew him, and made his son Josiah king of Judah.

CXCVII.

THE TEMPLE REPAIRED.



JOSIAH was a little boy when he began to reign; only eight years old. We have read before of many little boys who began when they were very young to love and fear the Lord; and Josiah was like these good children. The Bible tells us "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." But how could Josiah know what was right? The Bible tells us this too. It was because Josiah was taught of God. "While he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father;" and God, who had taken care of David, and loved and blessed him all his life, heard the prayer of young Josiah, and loved and blessed him also. God gave him His Holy Spirit to teach him to do right, and to rule his kingdom well. Josiah was ignorant, and weak, and sinful, like other children; it was the Spirit of God, not his own wisdom, and strength, and goodness, that made him do

right in the sight of the Lord. How happy Josiah was, to have a heavenly Father to keep and guide him, when his earthly father was dead! He was a happy child, because he was a holy child. And may not children now be as holy and as happy as Josiah was? Yes, if they seek to be so, as he sought. God is as willing to attend to children now as he was when Josiah lived. He will hear the prayers of every child who humbly seeks Him. Jesus still says, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." *Proverbs viii. 17.*

When Josiah grew older, he was anxious to do all he could for the service of God; and he commanded that the holy temple should be repaired. Money was collected from the people who came to God's house; and this money was given to carpenters, and masons, and builders, and they bought wood and stone, and began to repair the temple. The money given to these men

was not counted. The king and the priests knew that the workmen were faithful and honest, and that they would not steal nor waste the money; for they were the servants of God, and remembered always that His eye was upon them.

CXCVIII

J O S I A H .

WHEN Hilkiah, the priest, went into the house of the Lord to bring out the money, he found there the book of the law of God; and he carefully brought it out, and sent it to the king. Josiah honored this book very much, because it was the book of God; His holy law was written in it. Josiah told one of his servants to read the book to him; and he listened to it very attentively, and very reverently. This is what we ought to do when we have the Bible read to us; and when we read it to ourselves, we should remember that it is God's word, and attend to it very solemnly, and seek to understand it. But when Josiah had heard the book read, he began to weep; and he rent his clothes, and was in very great trouble. Why was this? What did God's law say to him to make him so unhappy? It told him of God's holiness and hatred of sin, and of His anger against those who disobey His commands. Josiah felt that he and his people had many times disobeyed God; and he was afraid that soon God might punish them, because they had done so much to make Him angry. This thought made Josiah tremble and rend his clothes. And when sin-

ners read the Bible now, there is much to make them tremble too. We read there that "all have sinned," and "the soul that sinneth it shall die." *Ezekiel* xviii. 20. This is very fearful indeed. Must we all perish, perish for ever in hell? We all deserve to perish; the Bible tells us so; but this is not all the Bible says. It tells us also of God's mercy; it tells us how sinners may be saved; "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." *1 Tim.* i. 15. He "was once offered to bear the sins of many." *Heb.* ix. 28. His blood "cleanseth us from all sin." *1 John* i. 7. The Bible says to every one of us, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." *Acts* xvi. 31.

There was a good woman living at Jerusalem, named Huldah. She was a prophetess; and God honored her very much in making known His will to her, by His Spirit. When Josiah was in so much trouble after reading God's law, he sent messengers to Huldah to ask her advice. God had seen all Josiah's trouble; He knew all his thoughts, and He had sent a message of comfort for him to the prophetess Huldah. She told the messengers, that God was indeed angry with the people of Judah, and that

He would surely punish them as His law threatened; but that He was not angry with Josiah. He said to him, "Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me, I have heard thee, saith the Lord. Thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see the evil that I will bring upon this place." This comforted Josiah. What a blessing it is to have God for our friend! Then we need never fear; for He will always be with us, to keep, and bless, and comfort us. If He please, He can preserve us from all evil; or He can take us away from it, as He took away Josiah, in peace. "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace." *Isaiah* lvii. 1, 2.

Josiah read the law of God to the people. He made a holy covenant with God, to love and serve Him with all his heart; and then he made his people promise that they too would serve the Lord. The people were willing and obedient; and they put away their idols, and said, "We will serve the Lord." Then Josiah threw down the idol-altars, and broke in pieces the images, and destroyed the altar which Jeroboam had set up in Bethel. Long ago, we read the story of the prophet who came to Bethel, in Jeroboam's time, and prophesied that the idol-altars should be thrown down, and men's bones burnt upon them. Now, this prophecy was fulfilled: Josiah was the king who destroyed the altars, as God had said. Josiah saw the tombs of many

of the wicked priests; and he opened these tombs, and took out the bones, and burnt them upon the altar. Then he slew the living idolatrous priests, and burnt their bones too. But there was one tomb in Bethel which Josiah did not open. There was a title upon that tomb, and Josiah asked what the title was. The people said, "That is the grave of the prophet who came from Judah, many years ago, and prophesied about those things which thou hast done to the altar of Bethel." Then Josiah said, "Let no man move his bones." So his bones were left quietly in their resting-place, with the bones of the old prophet who was buried by him.

After the idols were destroyed, Josiah kept the feast of the Passover, with all his people, in Jerusalem. This good king tried to teach his subjects the right way; and God blessed him in what he did, and his country was peaceful and happy many years. But after all this, the king of Egypt fought against Assyria, and Josiah went out to resist him. It was wrong of Josiah to join in this war without God's direction; and he was punished for his folly:—he was killed in the battle. His body was brought to Jerusalem; and all the people wept over it, because they loved and honored their king. He was safe now from all the evils that were coming on his country. His body was quietly resting in the grave, and his soul was in that happy place where no evil can come, and where so many of his fathers had gone before.

OXCIX.

THE WARNING BY JEREMIAH.



AFTER the death of Josiah, the people made his son, Jehoahaz, king of Judah. He was unlike his father; he was a wicked man, and did evil in the sight of the Lord. Jehoahaz did not reign long. Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, came to Jerusalem, and made Jehoahaz prisoner, and carried him away to Egypt. Jehoahaz died there; and the king of Egypt made another son of Josiah king of Judah. His name was Jehoiakim; he was wicked and rebellious, like his brother Jehoahaz.

And now the time was coming for God to punish His sinful and ungrateful people. He had spared them many, many years. He had given them time to repent; He had warned them by His prophets: He invited them to return to Him; He had promised to bless them if they would obey Him; but no—they would not attend. Still God was waiting in mercy; and now He sent one more messenger to warn them of their danger, and to tell them to repent and turn to God. This messenger was the prophet Jeremiah. God commanded him to stand in the court of the temple, and speak to all the people who came to worship there. What did Jeremiah say to them? This was his message: "Thus saith the Lord; if ye will not hearken unto me, and unto the words of my servants the prophets, I will destroy this house, and will

make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth." Did the people attend to what Jeremiah said? They heard what he said; but they were not willing to receive the warning which God sent them. The message made them angry, but it did not humble them. They disliked reproof, and were angry with the messenger who brought it. When Jeremiah had finished speaking, the priests and the people and the prophets took him, and said, "Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou said that this house shall be destroyed, and that this city shall be thrown down?" Then the people assembled, and the princes of Judah came from the king's house, and they all sat down at the gate of the temple, to talk about Jeremiah and the message he had brought them. The priests and the prophets were more angry than the rest. They ought to have taught the people to fear and serve the Lord; but these priests and prophets were proud, rebellious, unholy men. They sinned against God themselves, and they encouraged the people in sin too. They honored their temple, and loved their city: but they did not honor the God of the temple; they did not love Him who had kept their city in safety so many years.

These priests offered sacrifices and burnt-offerings to the Lord; but their sacrifices were not accepted, because they were not offered in



JEREMIAH BEFORE KING JEHOIAKIM.

faith. The prophets read God's holy law; but their knowledge of the law was of no use, for they read, but did not obey. God will not accept our services if we are not sincere;—if we do not truly love and wish to serve Him. He sees the heart. If there is no faith, and no love *there*, God will not attend to the prayers we say. And if we do not ask for the Holy Spirit to teach us, we shall have no blessing when we read His word.

Jeremiah stood quietly before his judges. They were stronger than he, but he was not afraid. He knew it was his duty to speak the truth boldly for God, and he prayed for courage to do so. God gave him the boldness and courage he needed; and when the priests and the prophets spoke to the princes and people, saying, "This man deserves to die, because he has prophesied evil against our city;" Jeremiah cried out to them all, "It is God who sent me to prophesy these things; He has spoken the words you have heard, and what He says is truth. If you wish your city and your temple to be spared, you must amend your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord, and then He will have mercy, and will not bring this evil upon you. I am in your power; do with me as you please. But know, that if you put me to death,

you will bring worse punishment upon yourselves, and upon your city, because what I have spoken is the word of God." And did the wicked priests and prophets put Jeremiah to death? No; God inclined the hearts of the princes and people to attend to Jeremiah. He made them fear to hurt His prophet; and they said to the priests, "No; this man does not deserve to die. He has spoken to us in the name of God." Then some of the elders rose up, and said, "Many years ago, Micah prophesied that this city should be destroyed because of the wickedness of the people. Hezekiah was king when Micah prophesied this. But Hezekiah and his people did not put Micah to death. They were not angry with him for speaking the truth. They believed what he said, and repented, and feared the Lord, and besought Him to have mercy on them; and God heard their prayer and spared them. Let us do as they did; and not kill Jeremiah, and bring God's anger upon us."

There was another prophet of the Lord, who prophesied as Jeremiah did, named Urijah. The wicked king Jehoiakim slew him with the sword; but Jeremiah was kept by his friends, and his enemies did not hurt him at that time.

CC.

AN EXAMPLE OF OBEDIENCE.



ONE day, about this time, the word of God came to Jeremiah, saying, "Go to the house of the Rechabites, and call them, and bring them into one of the rooms in the temple, and give them wine to drink." Who were the Rechabites? Many, many years before, they had come from the land of Midian. They were descendants of Jethro, the father of Zipporah, Moses' wife. We read about Jethro, a long time ago. He was the good old man who came to see Moses in the wilderness, and brought with him Zipporah, and her two sons. You remember how glad Moses was to see them again, and how kindly Jethro talked to him, and how pleased he was to hear the wonderful things Moses told him about God's kindness to the Israelites. All this had happened very many years before. Moses, and Zipporah, and Jethro, were all dead; but Jethro's children, the Rechabites, were still living in Jerusalem, and now Jeremiah was sent to them with this message from God.

Jeremiah went as God told him, and brought all the family of the Rechabites into one of the rooms in the temple. Then he took some pots full of wine, and cups, and poured wine into the cups, and gave it to the Rechabites, and said, "Drink ye wine." But the Rechabites, answered "No; we must not drink wine. Many years ago, our

father Jonadab commanded us never to drink wine; and never to build houses, nor plant vineyards, nor sow seed. He commanded us to live in tents, because we are strangers in this land; it is not our own country. We have always obeyed the command of our father Jonadab. We never drink wine, nor let our children drink it. We have not built houses, and we have no possessions here. But when the king of Babylon came into the land, then we left our tents and went into the city for safety; and now we dwell here in Jerusalem." When Jeremiah heard all this, he did not again ask the Rechabites to drink wine. He knew they were right to keep their promises to their father, and he did not tempt them to be disobedient. But after the Rechabites were gone to their homes, God spoke again to Jeremiah, and said, "Go to the people of Judah, and tell them what these Rechabites have done. Their father gave them a command, and they obey that command. He told them to drink no wine, and to this day they drink none. It is right of them to do this. They are obedient to their earthly father; but are you obedient to me, your heavenly Father? I have given you many commands. I have sent my prophets to you, and they have told you to repent, and turn from your idols, and from your wicked ways; but you have not hearkened to me. And

now, thus saith the Lord, Because you have not obeyed my command, as the Rechabites obeyed their father's command, I will bring upon you all the evil which I have threatened. I will punish you, because I spoke, but you would not hear; I called, but you would not answer."

It is a duty to obey an earthly father, but a still greater duty to obey God, our Heavenly Father. And does God give us commands, as He did to the people of Judah? Yes; God speaks to us now. He does not speak to us by His pro-

phets; but He speaks to us by His ministers, and by His word, and by His Spirit. And what does He say? He tells sinners what He told the people of Judah. He tells them to repent of their sins; to amend their doings; to turn unto Him, and to come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. And if sinners will attend to His message, God is ready to forgive; He is willing to have mercy. But if not, then punishment will come upon sinners now, as it came upon the obstinate, rebellious people of Judah.

COL

THE RECHABITES.



WHEN God sent this dreadful message to the people of Judah, He sent another message of kindness and blessing to the family of the Rechabites. Judah disobeyed their heavenly Father, and God must punish them; the Rechabites obeyed their earthly father, and God would bless them. God will never forget those who truly wish to do right; and He has promised in His word, that He will especially bless children who honor and obey their parents. The fifth commandment says, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee." *Exod. xx. 12.* This was the blessing God promised to the Rechabites. "Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your

father, therefore Jonadab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever." God promised that the Rechabites should never fail, never be cut off, never be destroyed. And has He remembered His promise? Yes; He never forgets; "Hath He said, and shall He not do it?" *Num. xxiii. 19.*

But where are the Rechabites now? Many, many hundred years have passed away; Jeremiah has long been dead; the people of Judah have been driven from their own land, and scattered over the earth. Where can we find the Rechabites? How can we know whether God still remembers and preserves them? A missionary who was traveling in the east a few years ago, has told us something about the descendants of these obedient Rechabites. This missionary was Dr. Wolff. He was himself a Jew;

but he had learnt to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was the true Messiah, the Saviour of the world ; and he was traveling about, seeking his Jewish brethren, to try to bring them to believe in Jesus too. In Mesopotamia, Dr. Wolff met with a wild-looking man like an Arab ; he was on horseback, riding through the deserts. Dr. Wolff was told that this man was a Jew ; so he spoke to him, and asked him if he could read. He could read both Hebrew and Arabic very well ; and was glad to see a Bible in Hebrew, which Dr. Wolff showed him. Then the missionary asked him about his country, and his people. The man took the Bible, and turned to *Jer. xxxv. 5* ; the story of the Rechabites which we have just been reading. Then he told Dr. Wolff that his people lived in the deserts near Mecca, in Arabia. He said, "We are descended from Jonadab, the son of Rechab. We drink no wine, and plant no vineyards, and sow no seed ; and we live in tents, as Jonadab our father commanded us. Come to us ; you will find 60,000 still living, and you will see that this prophecy has been fulfilled, 'Thus saith the Lord, Jonadab, the son of Rechab, shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.'" How faithful God is to His promises ! All will be fulfilled ; both His promises of

mercy to His friends, and His promises of punishment to His enemies !

God's people now are, like the Rechabites, strangers in the world ! This is not their home. They have here "no continuing city ;" they are seeking "one to come." Their home is in Heaven ; they have no possessions here, and they should try to remember this. If their home and possessions are in Heaven, their thoughts and hearts will be there too ; and then they will not care much about earthly pleasures and enjoyments. Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself." *Matt. xvi. 24*. Jesus Christ denied Himself when He was upon earth, and His people now must do the same. What are the things which they must deny themselves ? All sinful things ; everything which God has forbidden in His word. Sinful passions and tempers ; anger, and pride, and selfishness, and loving worldly things more than God. All these sins God's people must put away. We must pray for God's grace to teach us to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to help us to live in God's fear, and love, in this world ; that we may, at last, be taken to that world of happiness which God has prepared for all who truly serve Him.

CCII.

THE ROLL BURNT.



QUONCE again, God told Jeremiah to warn the people of their sins, and of the punishments that were soon coming upon them. Jeremiah was now to write the warning in the roll of a book. It was written in mercy. God was still willing to spare His rebellious people if they would turn to Him. He said, "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I propose to do unto them; that they may return, every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." How merciful and patient God is with His sinful rebellious people!

Jeremiah called one of his friends, a good man named Baruch, and asked him to write upon a roll all the words which God commanded. Jeremiah spoke the words, and Baruch wrote them down in the roll. When the book was finished, Jeremiah said to Baruch, "I am shut up; I cannot go to the house of the Lord. Go thou and read the roll which thou hast written to all the people in the Lord's house. Perhaps they will attend to the warning, and turn from their wicked ways; and then God will forgive and spare them." Baruch did as Jeremiah commanded. He went to the gate of the Lord's house, and there he read the roll to all the people. One of the men who heard the roll read was very attentive to the warning which God sent; and he went directly to the king's house,

and told the princes all he had heard. Then the princes wanted to hear the roll too; so they sent for Baruch and asked him to sit down and read the book to them. The princes listened very attentively while Baruch was reading; and when he had finished, they said, "How didst thou write all these words?" Then Baruch answered, "Jeremiah pronounced the words, and I wrote them as he commanded, with ink in the book." Then the princes said, "Go and hide, both thou and Jeremiah, and we will tell the king about the roll which we have heard. He ought to know the warning which God has sent to us." So the princes took the roll and put it in a safe place; and Baruch returned to Jeremiah, and told him to hide himself; and then the princes went to the king Jehoiakim, and spoke to him of the fearful things they had heard. Jehoiakim did not care for God's word, but he was curious to see the roll, and to know what Jeremiah had written; so he sent a messenger to fetch it. It was winter; and king Jehoiakim was sitting in his winter-house with all his princes, and nobles, and servants round him; and the fire was burning on the hearth. The messenger soon came back, bringing the roll in his hand; and the king commanded him to read it aloud before all the company. Then the messenger began to read the fearful warning which was written

in the roll. But when he had read two or three leaves, the wicked king began to be very angry with what he heard. He did not like to be told of his sins, and of the punishments which were coming upon him and his kingdom. He did not attend humbly to God's merciful warning; nor repent, nor weep, as good king Josiah had done, when he heard God's law. No,—in his anger, Jehoiakim seized the roll, and cut it in pieces with his penknife, and threw it into the fire. Some of the princes begged the king not to burn the roll; but he would not attend to them. Then Jehoiakim sent some of his servants to take Jeremiah and Baruch; but God Himself hid those good men, and their enemies could not find them.

Jehoiakim had burnt the roll, but he could not destroy the truth of God's word; he only brought worse evils upon himself. God told Jeremiah to take a new roll, and to write on it all the words of the first roll which the king had burnt. And God sent Jeremiah with a dreadful message to Jehoiakim. This was the message: "Thus saith the Lord, of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, I will punish him and his servants for their iniquity, and I will bring upon them, and upon Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against

them." Then Jeremiah took a new roll and gave it to Baruch: and Baruch wrote in it all the words of the first roll as Jeremiah had told him. And many new words were added in this new roll. And they were dreadful words; words of anger and threatening against the wicked king, and his wicked people.

How fearful it is to despise God's words and God's warnings! Sinners cannot resist the power of God. If he says He will punish His enemies, He will surely do it. They may try to fight against Him; they may try to destroy His word and His people, but they cannot prevail. God is stronger than they; He must conquer at last; and then where will His enemies be? What will become of those who now despise Him? The Bible tells us what words God himself has pronounced against them. "Because I called and ye refused; and set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me, but they shall not find me; because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." *Prov. i. 24—29.*

CCIII.

THE YOUNG CAPTIVES.



SOON after Jehoiakim had burnt the roll, God sent those evils upon him which had been threatened so long. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem, and took Jehoiakim prisoner, and bound him with chains, and was going to carry him to Babylon. But Jehoiakim died before he could be taken there; and his dead body was cast out unburied, beyond the gates of Jerusalem. None pitied, none cared for this wicked and rebellious king.

Nebuchadnezzar went into the house of God, and took away all the holy vessels he found there, and carried them to Babylon, and put them into his idol's temple. Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, reigned in Judah after his father, but only a very little time. Nebuchadnezzar came again to Jerusalem, and made Zedekiah, a relation of Jehoiachin, king; and carried Jehoiachin to Babylon, where he lived some years. A great many of the people of Judah were carried to Babylon also; all the princes, and nobles, and workpeople; only the poorest of the people were left in Jerusalem, with Zedekiah to reign over them. Jeremiah was there too; he was left to prophesy, and to warn the people of Judah.

Among the captives taken to Babylon, were some young nobles and princes. The king of Babylon was pleased with these children; and he said they should be taught

all the learning of the Babylonians; and after a few years be taken into his palace to stand before him. The Bible tells us a great deal about four of these young princes. Their names were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. One of Nebuchadnezzar's servants had the care of them, whose name was Melzar. Every day he brought them meat and wine from the king's table; for Nebuchadnezzar sent the young princes every thing he thought they might like; and they had masters to teach them, and all that this world could give to make them happy. But Daniel and his young friends had learnt, in their own country, better wisdom than they were taught at Babylon; they had learnt to seek happiness, not in this world, but in God; and all their delight was in holy and heavenly things. When they came to Babylon, they knew that they should be often tempted to forget God, the God of Israel, and to love the things of the world, the foolish and wicked pleasures of Babylon. But these children were determined that they would not forsake their kind and merciful God in this strange and wicked land.

The food which was brought to the young princes was sometimes food forbidden by the Jewish law; and sometimes it had been offered to the idols of Babylon. Daniel and his friends knew that it was wrong to eat this food. They were not now in their own country; but

they wished still to obey the laws which God Himself had given to them; and they determined not to displease Him by eating what He had forbidden. So one day, when Melzar came to see them, Daniel spoke to him, and asked to have no more meats brought them from the king's table. Daniel spoke very respectfully and gently to Melzar; for he knew that it was his duty to honor those who were set over him. And Melzar loved Daniel because he was so gentle, and humble, and obedient. Melzar said, "I am afraid, if you do not eat the food, and drink the wine that the king sends you, you will grow thin, and pale, and sickly; and then Nebuchadnezzar will be displeased; because he wishes to see you strong and healthy, like the other children in Babylon." But Daniel told Melzar, that God could make them strong and healthy with very little and very common food; and that the king's fine dishes could do them no good without God's blessing. And then Daniel said, "Try us for a few days. Give us only pulse to eat, and water to drink; and see if we grow thin, and pale, and sickly." So Melzar promised to try them for ten days. They ate the pulse, and drank the water given them with thankfulness and joy; because they felt that they had God's blessing, and were living in His love. And did they grow thin and sickly, as Melzar feared? No; after ten days, he came again to see them, and he found them fatter and more healthy

than any of the children in Babylon. God had kept them in health and strength, because they trusted in Him.

Here is another lesson to teach us self-denial. These young people were willing to deny themselves the nice meats and wines that Nebuchadnezzar sent them, because they feared to displease God. Are we self-denying like these children? We ought to be so, because self-denial is a duty which the Bible teaches. We live in a wicked world, as wicked as Babylon was; and very often we are tempted to do what is wrong, and to disobey God's holy commands. Perhaps there are many children now, who, like Daniel and the three other young people, wish to love and serve God; but they have friends and companions who often tempt them to love and serve the world, and its pleasures, and vanities, and follies. What must such children do? They ought to do as the young captives in Babylon did. They should pray to God to help them to serve Him; and to teach them, by His Holy Spirit, how they must please Him. And God will hear and direct His children now, as He did then. He is still willing to bless those who are ready to give up all for Him. He says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.

CCIV.

THE FOUR GREAT EMPIRES.



WHEN the time came for the young captives to be brought before the king, he found Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, wiser and more learned than any of the others. They were even wiser than the wise men of Babylon who had been their teachers. Why was this? Because God Himself had taught them. They had His law and His Spirit to instruct them in the best wisdom,—in the knowledge of God. Thus David said, "I have more understanding than my teachers, because thy testimonies are my study. I am wiser than the aged, because I keep thy commandments." *Ps. cxix. 99, 100.*

God gave Daniel the spirit of prophecy, and enabled him to understand dreams and visions, and to interpret them. One night, king Nebuchadnezzar had a very wonderful dream, and his "spirit was troubled, and his sleep went from him." So when he arose in the morning, he called all the wise men of Babylon, and desired them to explain to him this dream which disturbed and perplexed him so much. Then they asked the king to tell them the dream, but Nebuchadnezzar answered, "The thing is gone from me; I have forgotten it; but if you do not tell me the dream, and the interpretation, I will cut you in pieces, and command all your houses to be thrown down and destroyed." It was cruel

of Nebuchadnezzar to say this, and very unjust, too, to threaten to punish his wise men for not doing that which they could not possibly do by their own knowledge and wisdom. The dream came from God; and God alone could teach what that dream was, and what was its interpretation. But the wise men of Babylon were heathens; they never prayed to the true God, and they had not been taught by Him to know those things which were foretold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

The wise men tried to pacify the king; they told him the thing he required of them was impossible; but he would not listen to what they said. "The king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon." So this dreadful command was given, and Daniel and his friends were sought for to be slain too, for they were among the wise men of Babylon. But Daniel's wisdom was not like the wisdom of those magicians, and astrologers, and sorcerers, who had first come before the king. No—Daniel had been taught of God, and when he heard why the wise men were to be destroyed, he felt sure that his God would not forget him, but would give him power and wisdom to tell the king the dream and the interpretation. So Daniel went to Nebuchadnezzar, and asked for a little time to be given, and then he promised that he would declare to the king

all that he wished to know. Then Daniel went to his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and told them what had been done, and asked them to pray with him to God, that this wonderful dream might be made known to them, and that they might not perish with the wise men of Babylon. And God heard their prayer, and revealed the secret to Daniel in a night vision.

In the morning, Daniel went to Arioch, the captain of the guard, who had been commanded to destroy the wise men, and told him, that he now knew the dream, and could interpret it; so Arioch brought him before the king. Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke to Daniel, and said, "Art thou able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation?" Daniel answered, "The secret which the king has demanded cannot be shown by any of the wise men of Babylon. But there is a God in Heaven who reveals secrets, and He will make known to the king what shall be hereafter. And this secret has been revealed to me; not because of my wisdom and my goodness; but for the sake of my friends and companions, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart." Then Daniel told the king what the dream was, and afterwards he explained to him its meaning. Daniel said, "Thou, O king, sawest a great image. Its head was gold; its breast and arms silver; its thighs brass; its legs iron; its feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image, upon its feet of iron and clay, and

brake them to pieces, and afterwards, this stone became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

This was the dream, and then Daniel showed the king the interpretation of it. The vision was sent by God, who knows the future, as well as the past, and it was meant to teach Daniel, and Nebuchadnezzar, and all the people who heard it, many great events which would come to pass when they were dead and in their graves. The different parts of the image signified four great empires, which should, one after another, have great power and dominion in the world. The head of gold was the first of those great empires, the Babylonian, of which Nebuchadnezzar was then the rich and mighty king. But Nebuchadnezzar would soon die; his kingdom too would soon pass away, and be taken possession of by another people, and another king. We shall soon read how this happened;—how Cyrus came, and the Medes and Persians, and took Babylon; and then that great monarchy was gone for ever. The breast and arms of silver in the image, signified the second empire;—that of the Medes and Persians, the most powerful in the world, after the Babylonian monarchy was destroyed. We shall read a great deal about Cyrus, the famous king of Persia, and all the good things he did for God's people, the Jews. But Cyrus died, and many kings, who reigned after him in Persia, died; and, at last, the Persian monarchy was overcome and destroyed by a new empire,—the Macedonian. The thighs of brass in the image, represented this

third great monarchy. It began with Alexander the Great, of whom we hear so much in history, and who was prophesied of by Daniel, some time after this dream was sent to Nebuchadnezzar. Alexander subdued Persia, and made many great conquests, and his kingdom was, for a time, very powerful. But when he died, his dominions were divided into four parts, as Daniel had prophesied they would be, and they became weak and feeble, and were all conquered at last by another and stronger power. This was the Roman Empire, and signified in the dream by the legs of iron. It was the greatest and most powerful of all. When Jesus Christ was born, the Romans possessed almost all the known world, and they were a mighty people for very many years. But the Roman monarchy, like all the others, passed away in time. It became divided into ten kingdoms, represented by the ten toes in the feet of the image, and some of these kingdoms were strong, and others weak, as the ten toes in the image were partly iron, and partly clay. But what is meant by the stone which smote the image, and afterwards became a great mountain, and filled all the earth? That stone signifies a better and more powerful kingdom than any of the four of which we have been reading. It means the kingdom of our Lord

Jesus Christ. The kingdom began long ago; it was founded by God Himself, not by man; just as the stone was cut out "without hands," not by human power. That little stone is growing larger and larger, as Christ's gospel is more known and extended; though it is not yet the great mountain filling all the earth. But it one day will be. All the other kingdoms have passed, or will pass away; all have rebelled against God, and therefore He will not suffer them to remain; they will fall and pass away before that great kingdom which shall last for ever, as the stone smote the image, and broke it to pieces.

When Daniel had ended, king Nebuchadnezzar fell down before him, and did him honor, and made him "a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the province of Babylon."

Daniel did not forget his friends in his prosperity. He asked Nebuchadnezzar to be kind to them also; and Nebuchadnezzar did as Daniel wished, and made Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego rulers in the land. But all these honors did not turn their hearts away from God; they prayed God, who had helped them to resist temptation at first, to give them His grace still, that they might not forget Him, and fall into the sins of the people around them.

CCV.

THE FIERY FURNACE.



SOON after all this, Nebuchadnezzar, the idolatrous king of Babylon, made a great image of gold. It was set up in a plain in Babylon; and the people were commanded to fall down, and worship it. All the princes, and captains, and judges, and nobles, came at Nebuchadnezzar's command; and then a herald cried aloud to the people, "To you it is commanded, that at the time when ye hear the sound of the horns, and the harps, and the pipes, and the trumpets, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. And whoso will not fall down and worship, he shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, heard the command given; and they heard, too, the dreadful punishment which was threatened to those who disobeyed; but these good men felt that they could not obey, because He whom they served had commanded them to worship no strange gods. He had said, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me;" and "Thou shalt not make any graven images; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, asked God to give them strength to obey Him. God heard their prayer, and gave them faith to trust in Him, and to be willing even to die in His service.

At last the time came. The music sounded, and then all the people fell down, and worshipped the golden image. Let us remember, that there are many thousands of heathen in the world now, who worship images. Pray God to pity these poor idolaters; and to send His word to them, to teach them about the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego had enemies in Babylon, who watched to see if they would worship the golden image, or not; and when these enemies found that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, did not attend to the king's command, they ran directly, and told Nebuchadnezzar. They said, "Thou, O king, hast made a law, that every man shall fall down and worship the golden image when the music begins to sound; but the Jews whom thou hast made rulers in Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, they will not obey thy command, nor worship thy gods." Then Nebuchadnezzar was angry, and commanded the three Jews to be brought before him.

When they came, the king spoke to them, and said, "Is it true that you do not worship my gods, and the image I have set up? Now then, make yourselves ready; and when you hear the music sound, fall down and worship my image; and I will forgive you, and it shall be well with you; but if not, you

shall be cast directly into the burning fiery furnace; and who can deliver you then?" But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered, "O Nebuchadnezzar, our God, whom we worship, is able to deliver us from the burning furnace; and we know that He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image. We are willing to be thrown into the fiery furnace; but we cannot, we will not, disobey our God." It was God who gave these men power to confess Him so boldly before their enemies. He had taken away their fear; and now they stood quietly and peacefully before the king, waiting to hear their sentence, and ready to be cast into the fire. Nebuchadnezzar commanded his servants to make the furnace seven times hotter than it was before; and then some strong men took Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and bound them, and cast them alive into the burning fiery furnace. The furnace was so very hot, that the flames of the fire burnt to death the men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and cast them into it.

But what happened to these three good men? Did the God whom they served remember them in their trouble? Did He show Nebuchadnezzar that He was able to deliver His servants who trusted in Him? Yes; God was pleased to preserve his own people, and to teach His enemies what a powerful God He is. He commanded the flames not to burn them; and loosed their bonds, and walked with them in the fire; and God's promise was

fulfilled to them—"When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." *Isaiah* xliii. 2.

Nebuchadnezzar looked into the furnace; and then he arose in haste, and called his governors, and said to them, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They said, "True, O king." Nebuchadnezzar answered, "I now see four men in the furnace; and they are not bound; they are walking loose in the fire; they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Then Nebuchadnezzar went again to the mouth of the furnace, and cried, "O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come out, and come hither." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came out of the fire. Their clothes were not burnt; their hair was not singed; there was no smell of fire upon them. The king, and the princes, and nobles, and captains, all saw, and wondered; and Nebuchadnezzar now believed, that the God of Judah was a powerful God indeed. He cried aloud to all the people, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him! And now I make a law, that any person who shall dare to speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces; because there is no other God who can deliver as He delivers." Then Nebuchadnezzar gave great riches and honors to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and sent them away, and never again commanded them to worship the idol gods of Babylon.

What was it that made these three good men so bold, and fearless, and willing to suffer? It was their love to God, their faith in Him. They loved God so much, that they chose rather to be cast into the furnace, than to do anything to displease Him. They had so much faith in God, that they could trust all to Him; they knew He could deliver them if He pleased; and if not they were ready and willing to die. God has given the same faith and love to many other holy men, who have suffered for Him at different times, and in different parts of the world. There have been times in Christian countries, when people were required to conform to modes of religious worship, and profess belief in things which their consciences condemned. There have been many good men and women, who would not yield to such unreasona-

ble demands in matters of faith and worship. And they had courage and strength given them by God to refuse to obey. What then has been done with them? They have been imprisoned, tormented, and put to death. But God did not forsake His people in their time of suffering. Jesus was with them, as He was with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the fiery furnace. They could not see Him with their bodily eyes, but they felt His love in their hearts; He gave them patience to bear their pain, and to sing His praises in the fire; and when their bodies were consumed, He sent His angels to carry their happy souls to heaven, to be with Him for ever. And these blessed martyrs are now before the throne of God, singing the song of joy, "Salvation to our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb." *Revelation vii. 10.*

CCVL

JEREMIAH IMPRISONED.



ZEDEKIAH was still reigning in Jerusalem, and Jeremiah was still prophesying to the people who were left there. The Babylonians had gone away for a little time; but God told Jeremiah, that these enemies would soon come back again, and fight against Jerusalem, and take it, and burn it with fire. Jeremiah had many enemies in Jerusalem. He was a kind friend to them, always warning them faithfully, and trying to bring

them to repentance. But the people of Judah disliked to be told of their faults; they hated Jeremiah, and falsely accused him, and brought him before the princes to be judged. The princes believed what the enemies of Jeremiah told them, and were angry with the good prophet, and beat him, and shut him up in prison. There he stayed many days; but, at last, king Zedekiah sent for him secretly, and took him out, because he wished to know from Jeremiah, what God had said

about Jerusalem and the Babylonians. Zedekiah asked, "Is there any word from the Lord?" Jeremiah had a word from God, and a word which Zedekiah could not like; but the prophet knew that it was his duty to speak the truth, whether Zedekiah liked it or not, so he answered, "Yes; there is a word from the Lord, and it is this: thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon." When Jeremiah had told his message, he asked Zedekiah to take him out of the prison, that he might not die. Zedekiah attended to Jeremiah, and told him he should not go back to the prison where he was before. But Zedekiah commanded his servants to put the prophet in the court of the prison, by the king's house; and every day a piece of bread was sent to him there from the bakers' street.

The people were still angry with Jeremiah, because of the message he gave them from God. What was the message? "Thus saith the Lord, this city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon. Those that stay in the city shall die by the sword, and by famine; but those that go out to the king of Babylon's army shall live." This was God's word, and all would surely come true; but it displeased the unbelieving princes, and they again accused Jeremiah to the king. They told Zedekiah that Jeremiah did no good; and that he frightened the people so much that they would not be able to fight when the Babylonians came; and then the princes asked Zedekiah to put the prophet to death. Zedekiah was a weak man, and did not like to refuse the

princes, so he said, "Yes; you may do as you please with Jeremiah."

Then the princes went to the place where Jeremiah was, and took him away, and cast him into a dungeon. This dungeon was a dreadful place. It was a dark pit, full of mud and dirt, and without light or air: Jeremiah was let down into it by ropes, and then the cruel princes left him, and went away. Jeremiah stayed a long time in the dungeon; he sank down into the mire, and was almost choked, and almost starved too, for his enemies brought him no bread to eat. But in all his trouble, it was a comfort to Jeremiah to think why he was thrown into that dreadful place. It was because he had spoken the truth which God commanded him to speak. He was suffering for God, and he knew that God would not forsake him. God could hear Jeremiah's prayers in the dungeon, as He had heard the prayers of the three good men in the furnace; and send deliverance to him, as He had done to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. And at last, Jeremiah was delivered from the miry dungeon. Ebed-melech, one of the king's servants, told Zedekiah where Jeremiah was, and how much he was suffering; and the king pitied him when he heard the sad story, and commanded the servant to go with thirty men, and take Jeremiah out of the prison. So these men went into a room in the king's house, where old garments and rags were kept, and took away some of the rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon where Jeremiah was. Why? Because these kind men were going to draw him out of the pit, and they

thought that the cords under his arms might hurt him, so they said to him, "Put these rags under thy arms, under the cords, and then we will draw thee out." Jeremiah did as they told him, and the men pulled him up out of the dungeon, and set him upon dry ground.

And now Zedekiah sent again for Jeremiah, and asked him about God's message to the city of Jerusalem. Jeremiah first asked Zedekiah not to put him to death, and not to give him into his enemies'

hands. Zedekiah promised to take care of him, and then Jeremiah said, "This is God's message; if thou wilt submit to go with the king of Babylon's princes, thou shalt live; but if not, the city will be burnt, and thou shalt not escape. Obey the voice of God, and it shall be well with thee." Then Zedekiah told Jeremiah to keep all this secret from the princes, and sent him away; and Jeremiah stayed safely in the court of the prison, by the king's house.

CCVII.

JUDGMENT UPON JUDAH.



NOT long after this, all God's dreadful threats against Judah were fulfilled. Many years God had waited, and warned, and threatened, and promised. He had sent message after message to His sinful people, to invite them to return to Him; but all was of no use, and now the time of judgment was come. Do we wonder at the obstinacy and rebellion of the people of Judah, in resisting God's mercy so long? They were obstinate and rebellious indeed; but when we read about them, let us remember that all our hearts are as wicked as theirs, and that we have rebelled against God as well as they. God speaks to sinners now, long, very long, before they attend, and how merciful He is to spare them so long! But He will not wait for ever: punishment must come upon

rebellious sinners now, as it did upon rebellious Judah so many years ago. Death will come, and the day of judgment will come, and then it will be too late to ask for pardon, and seek for mercy. Seek the Lord now, while He may be found. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." *2 Cor. vi. 2.*

When Zedekiah had reigned about nine years in Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar came again with his army, and besieged the city. Many months Jerusalem was in the siege, and suffering from famine and sickness, for there was no bread for the people to eat. At last, Jerusalem was taken. The walls were broken down, and Nebuchadnezzar, and his princes, and his soldiers, came in, and took possession of the city. What became of Zedekiah? He tried to escape, and many of his servants with him; but the Baby-

Ionians pursued them, and overtook Zedekiah near Jericho, and brought him to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was very cruel to his poor fallen enemy. He took Zedekiah's two sons, and slew them before their father's eyes; and then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with chains, and carried him to Babylon. All the nobles in Judah were slain; and the king's house was thrown down by the Babylonian army, and burnt with fire; and the houses of all the people in Jerusalem were destroyed too. And the holy temple of God, which Solomon built, where the people of Judah had so often met to pray, and praise the Lord, that holy temple was burnt down to the ground, and the vessels in it were destroyed, or carried away to Babylon. Almost all the people of Judah were taken captive; only some of the very poorest were left behind.

But where was Jeremiah? Was he taken prisoner, and carried to Babylon? No; God who had taken care of Jeremiah so long, still preserved him, and inclined the heart of Nebuchadnezzar to show him kindness. When the city was taken, Nebuchadnezzar commanded his captain to "look well to Jeremiah, and do him no harm." So the captain sent, and took Jeremiah out of the prison court, where Zedekiah had put him, and delivered him to Gedaliah. Who was Gedaliah? He was the governor whom Nebuchadnezzar had set over the poor Jews who still stayed in Jerusalem. He lived at Mizpeh; and Jeremiah went to him there, and lived with him. God can preserve

His people in the greatest dangers, and He had promised to keep Jeremiah safely in all the troubles which came upon Judah. And there was another good man whom God promised to protect too. This was Ebed-melech, the kind servant who asked Zedekiah to take Jeremiah out of the dungeon. Ebed-melech loved Jeremiah, and showed him kindness, out of love to that God in whom both Jeremiah and Ebed-melech put their trust. God saw Ebed-melech's faith and love; and now, when the city was destroyed and the people killed, or scattered, or taken prisoners, He sent a message of comfort by Jeremiah to this faithful servant. What was the message? "Thus saith the Lord: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid. I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord." Let us put our trust in the Lord too, and then, whatever troubles or sorrows we may have, the God of Jeremiah and of Ebed-melech will be with us to comfort and bless us. He will preserve and guide us while we live, and take us to be with Him for ever in Heaven when we die.

Gedaliah was a wise governor. He advised his people to stay quietly in Mizpeh, and submit to the king of Babylon, who was now their master, and whom it was their duty to obey; and many of the Jews attended to Gedaliah's advice, and dwelt peacefully and safely at Mizpeh, where they had fields, and vineyards, and fruit, and oil, and wine. But after a little time, Geda-

liah was murdered by his cruel enemy Ishmael; and some of the Jews at Mizpeh were killed too, and the rest taken prisoners. But many of these prisoners were afterwards delivered by a man named Johanan, who went to fight against Ishmael. Ishmael escaped to the Ammonites; and then Johanan, and the Jews he had saved, went to Bethlehem. Jeremiah was still with them, and they all asked him to pray for them, and to teach them what they must do. Jeremiah was willing to pray for them, and to give them good advice. He talked to them a long time, and told them the truth. He said, "If you will stay quietly in this land, then God will protect, and save, and deliver you from the king of Babylon. But if you will not stay here, but go away into Egypt, or any other country, then God will be angry, and destroy you by the sword, and by famine, and by plague. Now then, be obedient to the Lord, and submit to His command."

The people had been very ready to ask Jeremiah's advice, but they were very unwilling to attend to it. They would not believe him, and they were too proud to do as he told them. They all cried out, "Thou speakest falsely. God has not sent thee to tell us this. It is not God's command, and we do not choose to obey thee." Then they all made themselves ready, and went to Egypt. But God was angry with these rebellious people, and His curse followed them to Egypt, and not His blessing. They were going to an idolatrous country, where God had commanded them not to go;

and their disobedience only brought worse punishment upon them. The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in Egypt (for the good prophet was obliged to go with the people there), and this was the message sent to them. "Thus saith the Lord; you have seen all the evil which I have sent upon Judah, because of the people's sins and idolatries; but you have not repented, nor humbled yourselves, nor submitted to my will. You have rebelled again and again; and now you have come to Egypt, when I commanded you not to go there. Therefore thus saith the Lord; because you have done this, I will bring evil upon you, and cut you off. You shall be destroyed by the sword, and by famine, and by pestilence. I will punish you in Egypt, as I punished your brethren in Jerusalem; none shall escape; and when at last you wish to return to Judah, you shall not be able." Were not the people frightened now? No; they were so hardened in sin and rebellion that they cared for nothing God said to them, and they boldly answered Jeremiah, "We will not hearken to the word thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord. We will do as we please. We will worship idols, and burn incense to them, as we have done, and as our fathers used to do in Judah." Jeremiah felt sad indeed when he heard this wicked speech. He had warned the people, and advised them, and threatened them, but all was of no use; so now he only said, "You may do as you please. You may worship these idols as you say, and forsake the Lord, your God. But hear ye the

word of the Lord: I will watch over you for evil, and not for good; all the men of Judah in the land of Egypt shall be destroyed, and you shall know whose word shall stand, yours or mine."

CCVIII.

THE SEVENTY YEARS' CAPTIVITY.



WHEN we read this story about the rebellion of the people of Judah, what should we learn from it?

Learn the very great wickedness of the heart. The heart of every man, and woman, and child, not renewed by the Holy Spirit, is as full of rebellion, and self-will, and ingratitude, as the hearts of the people of Judah were. Has your rebellious heart been made new? If not, the frown of God is upon you; and if you die as you are now, you must be sent away from Him for ever. What can you do? It is not yet too late to have your sinful heart made new and clean. The Holy Spirit is willing to cleanse you. Go to God, and say as David did, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in me;" and then your prayer will be heard, and God will pardon and bless you.

But what became of the good prophet Jeremiah? The Bible does not tell us how or where he died; but we read in history, that the wicked rebellious Jews in Egypt grew so tired of his faithful warnings that at last they put him to death. Jeremiah could warn them no more. The Jews in Egypt lost then their best earthly friend; and they lost him by their own folly,

and rebellion, and sin. But the day of his death was a happy, glorious one to Jeremiah. It was the end of all his sorrows and suffering, and the beginning of his everlasting joy in Heaven. He then received what God promises to all who shall truly serve Him to the end, when He says,—“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” *Rev. ii. 10.*

The wicked Jews could silence the holy prophet by putting him to death, but they could not prevent God from fulfilling His threatenings. Soon after, the powerful king Nebuchadnezzar, who had conquered Judah, came to Egypt, and subdued that country too. And then God's words to Jeremiah were fulfilled. The wicked Jews were almost all slain with the sword; very few of them escaped to tell the sad story of their sins and their punishment.

All this time, the prisoners, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Judah, were in sorrow and suffering at Babylon. There they had no temple, no sacrifices, no priests. Those around them were worshippers of idols; and when the poor captives remembered how far away their own beloved home was, where they had once prayed, and sung praises to the true God in peace and

joy, they wept for sorrow. And then they thought why they had been sent to this strange land; and they remembered that it was because of their sins and idolatry that God punished them. Many of them felt very much humbled, and repented, and turned to God, and asked Him to forgive and pity them. And did God hear them? Yes; He had not forgotten His people; He had not forsaken them for ever. Before they went to Babylon, God promised that their captivity there should last only seventy years, and that, at the end of those seventy years, He would bring them back to their own land again. This promise comforted the captives in their trouble; but still they could not forget their sorrow; and many of them, who were old, could not hope to live to the end of the seventy years, and to go to their home again. They found it hard to sing their joyful psalms of praise, while they were away from their happy country. They could not sing for weeping; but they wrote many beautiful psalms, and tried to praise God as well as they could in this strange land. They said, "By the rivers of Babylon we sat down; we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows that are therein. Those that carried us away captives asked

of us a song; they said, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. But how can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? How can we forget Jerusalem? We love Jerusalem more than any earthly joy." But then they remembered God's promise; and wiped away their tears, and said, "God is our help; unto thee we lift up our eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us. Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. Let us trust and hope in Him; for with Him there is mercy, and He will save us from all our troubles."

How pleasant for the faithful Jews to have God's promise to comfort them in a strange land! The people of God are now living in a strange land, far distant from their own home, the Heavenly Jerusalem. Like the poor captives in Babylon they have much sorrow, and pain, and trouble. But this will not last for ever. God will soon bring them home to that happy land where all tears are wiped away, and where there is no more sorrow. And He is always with them now; and He can comfort them by His Spirit, and by the promises He has given them in His word.

CCIX.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM.



NEBUCHADNEZZAR was a very powerful king; and he was proud of his power and his conquests, and his possessions. He knew something about the true God; Daniel, and the other Jewish captives, had often talked to him of the great God whom they loved and worshipped; and when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were delivered from the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar confessed that their God was indeed more powerful than any of the idols of the heathen. But Nebuchadnezzar had not yet truly repented and turned to God; his heart had not been made new by the Holy Spirit; it was still full of pride, and ambition, and love of worldly things. But God, in mercy, determined to subdue the pride of this great king; and to teach him his own sinfulness and folly, and to make him to give praise to Him alone. God was pleased to teach Nebuchadnezzar all this in a very wonderful way. We are going now to read how it was.

One night, when Nebuchadnezzar was asleep, he dreamed a very curious dream. This dream was sent by God to teach and warn Nebuchadnezzar. God was often pleased, in past ages, to speak to people in dreams. We have read before of the dreams of Joseph, and of the butler and baker in Egypt, and of King Pharaoh, and of the soldier in the camp of Midian, which comforted Gideon so much. All these

dreams came from God; but we do not hear of such dreams now. God might, if He chose, still speak to us in this way; but He is pleased rather to speak to us in His word. We have much more knowledge of God, from His Bible, than the people we read about in the Old Testament had. Let us attend to what we read, and thank God who has given us His holy word to teach and guide us.

When Nebuchadnezzar awoke, he thought very much about his dream. He knew that there was something wonderful in it, but he could not understand what it meant; so he called all the wise men of Babylon, and asked them to explain it. But these wise men had no knowledge in the things of God, because they were not taught by His Spirit, and therefore they could not help Nebuchadnezzar to understand his dream. At last, the king remembered that Daniel, the Jewish captive, was able to interpret dreams; so he sent for him. Then Daniel came before the king, and heard the wonderful dream. Nebuchadnezzar said to him, "O Daniel, I know that the spirit of the holy God is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee; and I have sent for thee, to tell me the interpretation of my dream. In my sleep, I thought I saw a very high tree, so high that the top reached above the clouds. The leaves of the tree were very fair, and its fruit was much; all the birds of the air made their nests

in the branches, and fed upon its fruit; and the beasts of the field lay under its shadow. While I was looking upon this beautiful tree, I saw in my dream a holy one come down from Heaven. He came to the high tree, and cried aloud, and said, Hew down the tree, and cut off the branches; shake off the leaves, and scatter the fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the birds from its branches. But leave the root in the ground; and bind it down with iron and brass in the grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven. Let the heart of a man be taken from him, and let a beast's heart be given to him; and let seven times pass over him." This was the wonderful dream; and then Nebuchadnezzar said, "O Daniel, explain this dream to me. The wise men of Babylon cannot understand it; but thou art able to interpret it, because the spirit of God is in thee."

God had taught Daniel what the dream meant; and Daniel felt sorry that he must tell it to the king. But, like faithful Jeremiah, Daniel was not afraid of speaking God's truth, so he said at once: "The tree which thou sawest, which grew, and was so strong, and which reached above the clouds, whose leaves were so fair, and the fruit of which was so plentiful; under which the beasts lay, and upon whose branches the birds made their nests;—this great tree, O king, is thyself. Thou art great and strong; thy greatness reaches to Heaven, and thy power to the end of the world. Thou didst see, O king, a holy one come from Heaven, and he gave commandment about the great tree,

saying, Cut it down; but leave the root bound with iron and brass in the grass of the field, and let it be with the beasts, and wet with the dew of Heaven, till seven times have passed over it. The interpretation of this, O king, is, that thou shalt lose thy power and thy greatness, and be taken from thy throne, and driven among the beasts. Thou shalt eat grass like the oxen, and be wet with the dew of Heaven, till seven years have passed away; till thou shalt confess that God is king, and that He alone ruleth over all. And now, O king, hearken to my advice; attend to the warning which God in mercy sends thee. Forsake thy sins and iniquities, and turn to the Lord. Humble thyself before him; do what is righteous in His sight, and show mercy to the poor; and then, it may be, God will spare thee, and not send these fearful judgments."

When Daniel had finished speaking, Nebuchadnezzar made no answer. The proud king would not attend to the advice he had received, nor humble himself before God. But God waited before He punished. A year passed away, and Nebuchadnezzar still enjoyed his riches and his power; he had all this time to repent, but he would not. At last, the dreadful judgment came. One day, at the end of the year, Nebuchadnezzar was walking in his palace at Babylon. He was admiring his possessions, and thinking what a great king he was. In his pride he said, "This is great Babylon which I have built by my power, and for my honor." But while the proud king was speaking, a voice fell from Heaven, saying, "O Nebu-

chadnezzar, the kingdom is gone from thee; and thou shalt be driven among the beasts, till thou confess that God is king; and that He alone rules over all." That very hour, the dreadful judgment came upon Nebuchadnezzar. God took away his reason, and he became a wild madman. He could not rule his kingdom, nor enjoy his riches, nor live comfortably in his palace now. He would not stay there. He rushed out into the fields, and lived with the oxen, and ate grass like them. He had no home, no friends; he was "driven from men," as God had told him. Seven years Nebuchadnezzar was in this dreadful state; his hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

But God was not going to destroy Nebuchadnezzar. All was done in mercy. Like the great tree in the dream, Nebuchadnezzar was cut down, humbled to the dust; but the root was in the ground still, bound round with iron and brass: his life was preserved; God watched over him, and kept him for these seven years. And at the end of those seven years, God looked in love and mercy upon the poor unhappy king. Nebuchadnezzar had been humbled; his proud heart was now willing to submit to God, and he lifted up his eyes to Heaven, and cried for pardon. God was willing to forgive. He gave Nebuchadnezzar

his reason and understanding again, and taught him to praise, and bless, and honor Him who is "King of kings and Lord of lords." And then Nebuchadnezzar felt that God alone is king over all the earth; and that He has power to do all things, and to rule all men as He pleases. God gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom again; and we may hope that he ruled over it in the fear of God, and in humble submission to His will.

Learn from this story what a dreadful sin pride is. None of us have anything to be proud of. All we have God gave us, and God can take away in a moment. Some people are proud of their riches; some of their power; some of their wisdom and knowledge; some of their beauty. Even children are often proud. Perhaps they are proud of their dress, or of their quickness in learning. All this pride is displeasing to God. What does the Bible say about it? "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." *James iv. 6.* The most holy people are always the most humble. There is no pride in Heaven. The blessed angels and spirits there are not proud. Jesus Christ Himself, the king of glory, when He was on earth, was not proud. He said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." *Matthew xi. 29.*

CCX.

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST.



WE are going now to read about another king of Babylon, who reigned some time after Nebuchadnezzar's death: his name was Belshazzar. He was proud and rebellious, as Nebuchadnezzar once was; but he did not, like Nebuchadnezzar, repent and turn to God before his death. God let Judah go into captivity, to punish them for their sins, but He was angry with their enemies who afflicted them; and He said He would destroy those enemies, and deliver His own people, when the right time should come. God had said this, by His prophet, many years before. He had taught Isaiah what armies should come against Babylon, and the name of the prince who should command them. These armies now came from Media and Persia; and they were commanded by Cyrus, the king of Persia's son. They came to Babylon, and began to besiege it; but Belshazzar thought himself very safe in his strong city, and did not fear his enemies.

One night there was a great feast in Babylon. Belshazzar was there, and his princes and nobles. They all ate, and drank, and made merry; and brought out the holy vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from God's temple in Jerusalem, and poured wine into them, and praised their idol gods of gold, and silver, and iron, and brass, and wood, and stone. But all the time,

the eye of God was upon this wicked company; He heard them blaspheming His holy name, and soon He was going to punish them. While they were all feasting, Belshazzar looked up to the wall of the room where they were sitting, and he saw the fingers of a man's hand writing upon the wall. He could not tell who was writing; he saw only the fingers, and the words written; and he could not understand the words. Then Belshazzar was very much frightened; and he called all his wise men, and asked them to read and explain the writing upon the wall, and promised to give great honors and riches to any one who could interpret it. But the wise men could not read nor understand the writing. Like Nebuchadnezzar's dream, it came from God; and only one taught by God's Spirit, had wisdom to read and interpret it. At last, Belshazzar's mother, queen Nitocris, came into the room, and told the king about Daniel; for she remembered that he had explained Nebuchadnezzar's dream, when the wise men of Babylon could not. When Belshazzar heard this, he sent for Daniel directly. So Daniel was brought in, and the king spoke to him, and said, "I have heard that thou hast wisdom to understand hard things, and to give interpretations. If now thou canst read and interpret this writing, which the wise men of Babylon cannot understand, I will clothe thee in scarlet, and give thee a chain of

gold, and make thee ruler in my kingdom."

Then Daniel stood up boldly, in the middle of the wicked company, and said, "I want not thy gifts; I care not for rewards; but I will read the writing unto the king, and make known the interpretation. O king Belshazzar, the great God gave thy father Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom, and much honor and power. But when Nebuchadnezzar grew proud of his glory, then God took him down from his throne, and he was driven among the beasts, till he knew that God alone rules over the kingdoms of the world. O Belshazzar, thou knowest all this, but thou hast not humbled thyself before God. Thou hast rebelled against Him, and brought out the vessels of His temple, and drank wine in them; and praised the gods of gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, and wood, and stone, which cannot see, nor hear, nor know; but the great God, who made all things, Him thou hast not praised nor glorified. And, therefore, He has sent the hand to write upon the wall: and now hear the writing, and the interpretation." Then Daniel read the words written on the wall. They were very few words; but they were words full of wonderful and dreadful meaning. What were they? "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Peres, Upharsin." Belshazzar and his company looked in wonder to Daniel, to tell them the meaning of these words, for they could not understand what was read. Then Daniel said, "This is the interpretation: Mene, God has

numbered thy kingdom, and finished it; Tekel, thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting; Peres, Upharsin, thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

This was the dreadful interpretation. Was Belshazzar frightened? Did he put an end to the feast, and send away his company, and fall down humbly before God, and cry for mercy? No; Belshazzar did nothing of all this. He clothed Daniel in scarlet, and gave him a chain of gold, and commanded him to be proclaimed ruler in the kingdom; and then the feast went on, and the company ate, and drank, and talked, and laughed, and sang, as they had done before. They thought, all these dreadful things which Daniel had spoken, would not come upon them yet;—perhaps they might not come for a long time; so they tried to forget them, and to enjoy themselves. There are many people now like that wicked king and his company; people who are rebellious and disobedient, and forgetful of God. God sends a message to these people. They cannot read it upon the walls of their houses, but they may read it in God's word. The Bible says to them, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people who forget God." *Psalm ix. 17.* How fearful it will be for such people to be cut off in their sins, and to be "found wanting" in the day of judgment! Without pardon, without hope, without mercy then!

CCXL

CYRUS.



YRUS and his army were now within the city, and Belshazzar knew nothing of it. How had they come in? Babylon was a very strong city. The walls were high, and the gates were brass, and the river Euphrates flowed through it. All this made the people feel very safe. They thought that the Medes and Persians could not get in; and they were not afraid of a long siege, because there was plenty of food inside the city. But God had promised to give Babylon to Cyrus, and when God promises to do a thing, He can make all easy. He taught Cyrus to find a way into the city without breaking down the walls and gates. How was this? There was a great lake outside the walls; and canals and ditches were made to carry off the waters of the Euphrates when it was too full. Cyrus commanded his soldiers to open these ditches, and let the water of the river flow into them. They did this while Belshazzar and his company were feasting in the palace. Cyrus thought that the best time, because all the people in the city were then so merry and so busy, that they had no time to think about their enemies. The water of the river was turned into the lake, and soon the bed of the Euphrates became almost dry. Then Cyrus commanded his soldiers to march through the channel of the river, into the city. They could do this very easy, because the water was

now so low that it could not drown nor hurt them. So Cyrus and his soldiers walked through the bed of the river, and were soon in the middle of Babylon. There were steps, and great gates of brass, on each side the river, leading into the streets. These gates ought to have been shut; but this night, the people had forgotten to shut the gates; so Cyrus and his men went through, and marched up to the palace. The palace gates were open too; and the soldiers went in, and in a moment killed the men who were standing on guard. The company were still at their feast; but when they heard the confusion, Belshazzar rushed out with his sword in his hand. But it was too late to save himself; there was no escape; Belshazzar was killed by the soldiers of Cyrus, and all the nobles were slain too. The rest of the people in Babylon, when they saw that the Medes and Persians had killed their king, submitted to Cyrus, and he took possession of the city. This was the end of Belshazzar and of his kingdom. Babylon now belonged to Cyaxares, the king of Media, and uncle of Cyrus; and when Cyrus had settled everything in Babylon, he went to Media, and told his uncle the good news of his conquest, and brought him back to live in his new city. Cyaxares is called, in the Bible, Darius the Mede.

When we read this story of the taking of Babylon, we must remember that it was not the power, nor

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wisdom, nor bravery of Cyrus that gained the victory. It was God who brought Cyrus to Babylon; who taught him the best way, and the right time to take the city; and who gave him success in all he did. It was God who said "to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up the rivers;" and who said of Cyrus, "He shall perform all my pleasure." *Isaiah* xliv. 27. 28. God had taught his prophets to predict these things about Babylon, many years before Cyrus was born.

But why did God destroy the

kingdom of Babylon? Because of the wickedness of the people. Sin has caused the destruction of many countries and cities. There is only one thing that can make a country truly safe and happy. Not riches, nor strength, nor power; but holiness; because God's blessing will be upon a righteous nation, and then no enemy will have power to hurt it. "Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." *Psalms* cxliv. 15.

 CCXII.

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN.



DANIEL still lived in Babylon in great favor and honor with king Darius, who made him ruler over the kingdom, and over the princes and nobles. But Daniel had enemies in Babylon. The princes hated him, and did not like him to have so much honor; and they were always watching to find some fault in him, that they might accuse him to the king. But Daniel was so good and holy a man, and so honest and just in all he did, that his enemies could find nothing wrong in him to tell Darius. Why was this? How was it that Daniel was able to do right, and to behave so well at all times? Was he not a sinner like ourselves, and tempted to do wrong as we are? Yes. But Daniel knew how to get help and strength; he sought them from God every day he lived, and many

times every day; and God heard his prayers, and gave Daniel all those holy gifts which he needed and asked for.

But Daniel's cruel enemies were still determined to accuse him to the king; and there was one thing of which they knew they could accuse him. What was it? His praying to God. They saw him often kneel down, and pray to his own God, the God of Israel, who had made all things; not to the idol gods whom his enemies feared and worshipped. So, one day these princes went to king Darius, and asked him to make a new law. What was it? That no one in the kingdom should make a prayer or request to any god or man, for thirty days, but to the king only; and that whoever disobeyed this command, should be taken and thrown into a den of lions. Darius

did not know why the princes asked for this; and, without thinking about Daniel, he made the law, and sent them away very much pleased. Why were they pleased? Because now they knew that they should soon be able to accuse Daniel; for they were sure he would disobey the command, and pray every day to his God as he had done before.

But what could Daniel do when he heard the king's command? Did he give up praying for the thirty days, and make his requests to the king alone? No; Daniel had many things to ask for every hour; things which Darius could not give him. He wanted pardon, and grace, and strength, and comfort; Daniel could not wait thirty days without these. He must disobey the law. He always tried to obey Darius, when he could do so without displeasing God; but now he could not: for God's command is to "pray always;" and Daniel knew that he must obey God more than man. Then did he try to hide from his enemies, and pray in some secret place where they could not see him? No; he opened his windows towards Jerusalem, his own beloved home, where the holy temple had stood, and knelt down and prayed, and gave thanks to God, three times a day, as he had done before. Why did Daniel do this? Not to make a boast of his goodness, but to show his enemies that he was not afraid nor ashamed of praying to God. Never be afraid of doing right. Perhaps sometimes you do not like to read the Bible, and to pray to God, for fear your companions should laugh at you, or despise you. Is it

right to be afraid or ashamed of doing what God commands you? No; do as Daniel did: think of your duty to God, and try to obey Him. Remember what Jesus said to his disciples, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father." *Mark viii. 38.*

Was Daniel seen praying? Yes; his enemies soon found him on his knees, asking help from God; and they ran directly, full of joy, to tell the king. They said, "O king, didst thou not command, that no one should make a petition to any god or man for thirty days, but to thee alone? Didst thou not say, that whosoever disobeyed this law, should be cast into a den of lions?" Darius answered, "Yes, I did." Then the men said, "There is one man who does not care for thy command, O king. He kneels down and makes his petition to his God, three times a day. This man is Daniel, one of the Jewish captives." Then Darius was sorry, for he loved and honored Daniel, and he tried very hard to save him. But the cruel enemies said, "the law cannot be changed; Daniel has disobeyed it, and he must suffer the punishment." Then Darius commanded Daniel to be brought, and cast into the lions' den; but as the men were hurrying him away, the king said, "O Daniel, the God whom thou servest, He will deliver thee." Darius did not know much about Daniel's God; but he thought, that if God was as good and powerful as Daniel said, He would surely save His faithful servant in this time of trouble. So Daniel was thrown into

the den; and a stone was put upon the mouth of the den, and the king himself sealed the stone, and then went home to his palace. All that night Darius fasted and mourned for Daniel. He would have no music, nor singing, nor rejoicing, in his palace; he could enjoy nothing; and when he lay down on his bed he could not sleep; he was so anxious, so unhappy about Daniel. And very early in the morning, Darius arose and went to the den: for he could wait no longer; he must know whether Daniel was living, or whether he had been torn in pieces by the furious lions.

When the king came to the den, he cried out, "O Daniel, is thy God, whom thou servest, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Darius waited very anxiously for the answer: but how glad he was when he heard Daniel's voice again, and found that he was still alive and well in the lions' den! And what did Daniel say? He said, "O king, my God has sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, and they have not hurt me." Then Darius was glad, and he commanded that Daniel should be taken out of the den.

"So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God."

And now the king determined to punish Daniel's wicked accusers; so he commanded them to be brought and cast into the den. They had no God to preserve them; no holy angel was sent to shut the lions' mouths for them; no, the savage beasts sprang upon them in a moment, and broke all their bones to pieces before they came to the bottom of the den. All the people saw, and wondered; and confessed that Daniel's God was indeed a powerful God, able to deliver His servants and to punish His enemies. And then Darius wrote to all the people in His kingdom, and told them the wonderful story of Daniel's deliverance, and commanded them to fear and tremble before the great and powerful God of Daniel.

Let this powerful God be your friend, as He was Daniel's; and then you need not fear any enemy, nor any trouble. He is the "Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation." 2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

CCXIII.

THE RETURN OF THE CAPTIVES.

DARIUS did not live long after this; and, when he died, Cyrus became king of Media. Cyrus was a very wise and powerful prince. He was king of Persia as well as Media; and had great possessions, and had made many conquests, and gave many wise and good laws to his subjects. But one thing that Cyrus did was better than all the rest. What was it? It was the proclamation which he made, that all the captive Jews in his kingdom should return to Jerusalem, and build a temple again there to the Lord their God. It was God Himself who put this good thought into the heart of Cyrus, and taught him to show kindness to the people of Judah. Many years before it had been prophesied, that after seventy years' captivity, Judah should return to their own land; and now, that the right time was come, God found a way to fulfil His promise. What God says, He always does. We may think many things very hard; they may be hard to us, but not to God; for "with God all things are possible." He can incline the hearts of men to do as He pleases, and to fulfil His will, as Cyrus did.

But what was the proclamation of Cyrus? It was this: "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia; the Lord God of Heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He hath commanded me to build Him an house at Jerusalem.

Who is there among you of His people? Let his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel." How rejoiced the poor captives were to hear this proclamation; and how thankful they felt to their kind and faithful God! Cyrus sent back the holy vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Jerusalem. There were 5400 of them, all of gold and silver; and these were given to the Jews, to carry again to Judea, for the temple they were going to build. The captives very soon made all ready to return to their own land; and looked for the last time upon Babylon, where they had spent so many years of trouble, and rejoiced to think that they should never see it again. They had a long journey to take; but they were so happy to go, that they did not care for any trouble on the road. How many returned to Jerusalem? 42,360; and a great many servants, and maids, and singers; and all their horses, and asses, and mules, and camels they took with them too; a very great number. These Jews were rich; for God had inclined their neighbors to give them gold and silver, and all they wanted for their journey, and for their temple at Jerusalem.

When they came to the end of their long journey, and found themselves once again in their own beloved land, the first thing they thought about was the building of the temple. They had long been

without a temple, in a heathen land where their own God was not worshipped; but now they could build a house where they might praise and pray to Him; and they began this good work directly. All were willing to give of their riches to help forward the building. But before the temple was built, an altar was set up, and the priests offered sacrifices upon it every morning and evening. And they kept all the feasts which God had commanded them to keep, and tried in everything to obey His laws. Joshua was high priest, and Zerrubbabel was governor; they were both holy men, and encouraged and helped the people in what was right.

In about a year, all was ready to begin the temple. They had cedar-trees from Lebanon, and money enough to pay the carpenters and masons; all helped in the building, and the Levites were appointed to direct the work, and to see that everything was done rightly. Then the people assembled to see the foundation of the house laid. It was a joyful and glorious day at Jerusalem. The priests were there in their robes, and the Levites, with instruments of music, to praise the Lord. Then "they sang together, praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, because He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever to Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid." But there were some people weeping in the midst of all this joy. Who were they, and why did they weep? They were the old men who had returned to Jerusalem.

They were so old, that they remembered the first temple which had stood there seventy years before. They had worshipped in it, and seen its beauty; now they saw it in ruins; they could never worship in it again. They might have a new temple; but not one so beautiful, nor large, nor glorious, as the temple of Solomon was; *that* was gone for ever. These thoughts made the old men weep; but they wept in thankfulness, as well as in sorrow. The young people, who had been born in Babylon, and had never seen the first temple, had no remembrance to make them sad; they felt only gladness, and they shouted aloud for joy; so there was a sound of weeping, and a sound of rejoicing too; and the noise was heard afar off.

All our pleasant days are like this happy day among the Jews; there is joy in them, and sorrow too. We can never be *quite* happy here: our happiest hours must have some sadness in them. Young people, perhaps, think that all is bright, and beautiful, and pleasant; but those who are older, and think more, have much to make them feel sad; and they often weep, when the young are gay, and merry, and joyful. When God's people are unhappy here, they love to remember that they are soon going to another world, where there is no sorrow, because there is no sin. They will never weep in heaven. There "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." *Revelation xxi. 4.*

CCXIV.

P E R S E C U T I O N .



THE Jews had many discouragements from their enemies while they were building their new temple.

Who were these enemies?

They were the people who had been sent from Assyria, many years before, to live in Samaria and other cities, after the ten tribes had gone into captivity. These people knew a little of the true God, and sacrificed to Him; but they did not serve Him aright; for they worshipped idols as well as God. When these enemies heard what the people of Judah were doing, they came to Zerrubbabel, and pretended to be very friendly, and said, "Let us build with you, for we seek God as you do, and sacrifice to Him, and serve Him." But Zerrubbabel and Joshua knew that these people did not truly love God; so they answered, "No, you have nothing to do with us; we do not want your help; we can build God's house ourselves, as Cyrus commanded us." This made the enemies angry; and they determined to trouble the people of Judah, and prevent the building of the temple. While Cyrus was living, the Samaritans could not do much to hurt the Jews; but after his death, they wrote a letter to the new king of Persia, full of cruel and wicked accusations against God's people. What did they say in the letter? They told the king that the Jews were rebellious and wicked people, who were building a city which would be very hurtful to

Persia. And then they asked the king to command the Jews to leave off building, and not to let them finish their city and temple. And did the king attend to what these enemies said? Yes; he was afraid that the people of Judah might grow powerful, and rebel against him, and give him trouble; so he wrote to the Samaritans, and told them to command the Jews to leave off building directly. The enemies were pleased with this answer to their letter; and they went in great haste to Jerusalem, to tell the people of Judah what the king had said. The Jews had everything ready for the building of the temple; and all were at work very busily when the message came. Their enemies spoke unkindly to them; and told them to leave off directly, and put away their things, and dismiss the carpenters and masons, and do no more work; and said that, if they disobeyed, the king would punish them for rebelling against his law. This was a disappointment to the Jews, but they could not resist their enemies; so they submitted quietly, and waited in patience God's time. They knew they must succeed at last, and finish their temple and their city, because God Himself had promised that they should; but they felt it very hard to wait patiently many long years before they could begin their work again.

When people are busy and active in God's service, they often have

troubles, and disappointments, and difficulties. Satan does not like holy things to prosper; and he stirs up his own servant to hate and persecute the servants of God. We read in history many stories of the persecutions which good people have suffered because they were so active in the service of God. Many of the holy men who preached the gospel after Christ's ascension to Heaven, suffered very much from the unbelieving Jews, and heathen kings and emperors. Stephen, and James, and Peter, and Paul, and many more, were put to death by their cruel enemies, for teaching people

the way to Heaven. The Bible tells us that all those who try to love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ, "must suffer persecution." God's people know this; and they are ready and willing to suffer, if it be His will. But, like the Jews we have been reading about, they have one thing to comfort them. They know that God's work must prosper at last; for God Himself hath said, that a time will come when there will be no cruel persecutions; when all will know and serve the Lord; and when His will shall "be done on earth, as it is in Heaven."

OOXV.

THE NEW TEMPLE.

DID the Jews at last finish their temple? Yes; after many years, there was a new king of Persia, named Darius, and he was willing to be kind and friendly to the Jews. The time was now come for God's house to be built; and the good prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, told the people to arise and work. But the Jews had been so long idle, and so often hindered and persecuted, that they were not willing to work at first. They said, "The time is not yet come for the Lord's house to be built. If we begin, our enemies will soon make us leave off again, as they did before." But God was displeased with the Jews for saying this. It showed that they had very little faith in Him, and trusted very little in His

power and help; so He sent a message to them by Haggai, to tell them how angry He was. This was the message: "Is it time for you to dwell in your ceiled houses, and my house lie waste? Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your ways." God showed His displeasure, by not blessing His people. He gave them no rain, and no dew; and the grass dried up, and the fruits did not ripen: and there was very little corn, and oil, and wine. And why was this? God Himself told them why. He said, "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm. Why? Because mine house is waste, and ye run every man to his own house. Therefore the heaven over

you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will bless you." If we do not attend to the work of God, we cannot have His blessing upon our own work. Nothing will prosper with us, if we do not first attend to the things of God. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added unto you." *Matthew vi. 33.*

But did the Jews obey the command which Haggai brought them? Yes; "the people did fear before the Lord;" and the two good men, Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest, helped and encouraged them to arise and build. And did the work prosper? Yes; their enemies tried indeed to hinder them, and wrote letters to Darius to tell him what the Jews were doing. But Darius determined to see for himself whether the Jews were right or not in building the temple; and whether Cyrus had really given them leave. So he sought in the house where the books, and papers, and rolls were kept, and there he found the written proclamation of Cyrus. You remember what the proclamation was. It was the kind letter which Cyrus wrote to the Jews, telling them they might return to Jerusalem, and build the temple of God. When Darius had read this, he wrote directly, and commanded that the Jews should be allowed to build the temple; and that bullocks,

and rams, and lambs, and all they needed for their sacrifice, should be given them; and that if any man dared to hinder them, his house should be pulled down, and himself hanged. The Jews rejoiced when this message came to them. The work went on, and prospered, and God blessed them, because now they were obeying Him, and doing His work. The rain came, and the dew; and the corn sprang up, and the fruit ripened; and they had plenty of oil and wine; and all was well with them, because they had God's smile, and God's blessing. In a few years the temple was finished; and then they kept the dedication with great joy and thankfulness, praising God who had so blessed them, and prospered their work.

If we serve God as actively and faithfully as these Jews did, we shall have His blessing too. There are many ways in which we may serve God. He has given work to all His servants, and He is not pleased if they are idle and slothful. Our great business is to learn to know and love God ourselves; but then we must try to help others also to know and love Him. There are many temples to be built for His worship still. Many countries are now without churches, and without ministers; desolate and waste, as Jerusalem was before the holy temple was built again. What can we do? Can we go to those heathen lands, and build the churches, and preach to the people there? Perhaps we cannot go *ourselves*, but we may help to send *others*; we may give our money, as the Jews so willingly gave theirs, for the building of God's temple. It is selfish to live

in our happy country, where we have so many churches, and ministers, and Bibles, without caring for the poor people in distant countries

who have none of these blessings. If we really love God ourselves, we shall be anxious for all the world to love Him too.

CCXVI.

QUEEN YASHTI.



WE are now going to read a story about some Jews who were living in Persia, while their brethren were building the temple at Jerusalem. The king who was now reigning in Persia, is called in the Bible Ahasuerus. He was a rich and powerful king; and his possessions were very large indeed; he reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces. We often read about great, and rich, and powerful kings; let us always remember, that greatness, and riches, and power, cannot make people happy. Only God's blessing can give us real true happiness. With this, the poorest person may be peaceful and contented; without it, the richest kings must be discontented and miserable.

King Ahasuerus made a great feast for his princes, and nobles, and servants; and showed them his riches, and all the fine things he possessed. The feast lasted one hundred and eighty days; and when it was ended, Ahasuerus made another feast, for seven more days, for all the people both great and small; and this feast was in the court of the garden of the king's palace. The place where the company met was very beautiful and splendid.

The curtains were white, and green, and blue; and the pillars to which they were fastened were of fine marble. The couches or sofas were of gold and silver; and the floor was a pavement of blue, and red, and black, and white marble. The king gave his friends everything they could wish to eat and to drink; and the wine which they drank was poured into beautiful vessels of gold.

The ladies were not at the king's feast; but they all met in the palace, where a feast was made for them by the queen, whose name was Vashti. Before the feast was ended, king Ahasuerus wished to see the queen, and to show her to all the princes and people; so he sent a message to her, by seven of his servants, desiring her to come. But Vashti did not like to come, and she refused to obey the king's command; so the messengers returned to the king without her. Ahasuerus was angry with the queen for this disobedience, and determined to punish her; but first he asked advice of the princes and wise men who were his friends, and said, "What shall we do by law to queen Vashti, because she has disobeyed the king's command?" Then one of the princes answered, "Vashti ought to be punished for

what she has done; for if she is not, the women in Persia will learn to be like her, and will disobey and despise their husbands; and that will give us trouble. Let the king send Vashti away, and choose another and a better queen; and let a law be made, commanding all wives to honor and obey their husbands, that we may have no more rebellion and disobedience." The king was pleased with this advice, and did as the princes wished. The law was made, and Vashti was sent away in disgrace. A little time before, she had been a great queen, rich and honorable; now, she had lost her crown, and her power, and her riches; and was hated, and despised, and disgraced. There is nothing in this world that will stay with us long. Money, honor, power, friends,—all go away from us very soon; and then we must say what Solomon said,—“All is vanity and vexation of spirit.” *Eccles. i. 14.*

It was unkind of Ahasuerus to command Vashti to do what she did not like; but it was wrong of Vashti to refuse to obey her king and husband. The Bible says, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands;” and, “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” *Col. iii. 18, 19.* If this king and queen had known and loved God, the one would not have been unkind, and the other would not have been disobedient; and then they would have lived happily and peacefully together in love, without quarrelling, and at last parting in such a sad way. But Ahasuerus and Vashti knew very little about the true God, and His holy laws. How thankful we ought to be that we have the Bible to teach us what is right! Let us remember, always to read and attend to it; and pray for God’s grace to help us to obey its commands.

 CCXVII.

THE NEW QUEEN.



WHEN his passion was over, Ahasuerus began to think about Vashti, and to feel sorry for what he had done. People are often vexed about the things they have done in anger, when it is too late for sorrow to do any good.

Ahasuerus did not call Vashti back again, but he determined to have a new queen; so he commanded all the beautiful young women in his kingdom to be

brought to the palace, that he might see them, and choose one from among them, and make her queen. A great many young women came to the palace, but the Bible tells us about only one of them. Her name was Esther. She was a Jewess; and her parents and friends had been carried captive to Babylon, with Jehoiachin, many years before. Esther’s father and mother both died, and left their poor child a little orphan captive. How sad for

Esther to be left an orphan and a prisoner in a strange land! But that kind God who says, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive," took care of this little girl when her parents could take care of her no more. Esther had a relation named Mordecai. He was a good man, and a kind friend to this poor orphan; for when her parents died, he took her to live with him as his own daughter. Esther grew up to be very beautiful; but the Bible does not praise her for her beauty. We have often read, that God does not look at the outward appearance, but at the heart; holiness is what pleases Him, not beauty. "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." *Prov. xxxi. 20.* And did Esther fear the Lord? Yes; we may hope that she began early to seek the God of Israel; and that He was her father, when her earthly father was gone. She was a gentle, affectionate, obedient child to Mordecai; for all who truly love and obey God as their Heavenly Father, will love and obey earthly parents too. Mordecai had been like a father to Esther, and she knew that she ought to honor and love him.

When the king commanded all the young women to be brought to the palace, Mordecai let Esther go with them; but every day he went

to the palace to ask how she was; for he loved her, and felt very anxious about her. The king, and the people in the palace, did not know that Esther was a Jewess. Mordecai had desired her not to tell them this, and Esther kept the secret as he wished. Mordecai did not desire Esther to tell a lie; that would have been very wrong; it is never right to say what is untrue; but sometimes, it may be right and wise not to tell all we know. Mordecai thought it best that Esther should not be known as a Jewess in a place where the Jews had so many enemies.

When the young women were brought before the king, he liked Esther better than any of them, and chose her for his queen. So he took the crown, and put it upon her head; and then he made a great feast for his princes and servants; and all the people rejoiced very much because Esther was queen. This was a great honor to Esther! She was taken to live in a palace, and had everything she could desire. But Esther had great need now of God's help and guidance, for she had many temptations in the palace; riches, and worldly pleasures, and vain company. We may hope that she asked God to keep her from loving these things too much; and that He heard her prayer.

CCXVIII.

H A M A N .



MORDECAI had a place by the king's gate, where he sat every day. Esther had now a more honorable place than Mordecai, for she sat upon the throne; but Esther did not forget her kind friend after she was queen. She still remembered and loved him; and attended to all he said, as obediently as when she was living with him. This showed how dutiful, and affectionate, and grateful, Esther was. She was right to be so. Try to be like her; never forget an old and kind friend. "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not." *Proverbs* xxvii. 10.

While Mordecai was sitting in his place by the gate, he made himself very useful to the king. Two of the servants made a conspiracy to kill Ahasuerus. Mordecai discovered the conspiracy, and went directly, and told Esther; and she told the king what Mordecai had said. The accusation was found to be true; and the two wicked men were taken and hanged upon a tree. Mordecai did right to tell the king about this conspiracy.

Did the king thank and reward Mordecai? No, he gave him nothing; but the story of the conspiracy, and the discovery of it, was written in a book, and put away in a safe place, that it might not be lost nor forgotten. We shall soon read about this book again.

There was a man in the palace

whom the king loved, named Haman. He was not a good man; he was proud, and cruel, and deceitful; but the king honored him, and commanded his subjects to honor him too, for Ahasuerus did not know at first how very wicked Haman was. Every time Haman passed, the servants in the king's gate bowed to him, and did him reverence; but Mordecai refused to do this. Why? Is it not right to show honor to superiors? Yes; the Bible tells us to give to all the honor which is due to them; but the honor which Haman wanted, was not due to him; he had no right to it. It was idolatrous homage which Haman wished; and Mordecai knew it would be wrong to give that. And we read, too, that Haman was an Amalekite, one of that wicked nation which God had commanded His people to destroy; Mordecai could not forget God's command, and honor an Amalekite. The servants spoke to Mordecai, and wished him to bow when Haman passed; but Mordecai would not attend to what they said; so they went, and told Haman.

The proud man when he heard this, determined to punish Mordecai. He wished to kill this poor Jew, and all the Jews in the kingdom too; for Haman hated the Jews. But he had not power himself to destroy them; so he went to the king, and asked him to command them all to be put to death.

Haman said, "There are some people scattered about the kingdom, who have laws of their own, and do not keep thy laws. If they are suffered to live, they will do much hurt; therefore, if it please the king, let them be destroyed; and I will pay those who do the business; and the money shall be

brought into the king's treasury." Haman thought he should soon repay himself, by taking the money which belonged to the Jews whom he wished to destroy. Did Haman tell the king that Mordecai had refused to bow, and do him honor? No; Haman said nothing about that.

CCXIX.

THE JEWS IN DANGER.

DID Ahasuerus attend to Haman's cruel wish? Yes, he did. He took his ring from his hand, and gave it to Haman, and said, "All the money shall be thine, and the people too. Do with them as thou thinkest best." Then Haman went away very much pleased; and wrote letters to the governors of all the provinces, in the king's name, and sealed them with the king's seal, and sent them by post to every place in the kingdom. What did Haman say in these letters? He commanded, that on the thirteenth of the month Adar, all the Jews, young and old, men, women, and little children, should be destroyed; and their riches and possessions taken away. All the people were to be ready for that dreadful day,—the thirteenth of the month Adar. The posts went out, and hastened to carry the letters as the king commanded; and then Haman came to the king, and sat down to eat and drink with him. They were both quite careless about the sufferings of the poor

Jews. The Jews were weeping, and full of sorrow; but Ahasuerus and Haman could eat, and drink, and talk, and laugh, without thinking about them, or pitying them.

Was not Mordecai in great trouble now? Yes; when he heard what was done, he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry. And in all the provinces, wherever the letters went, there was great crying, and fasting, and weeping among the Jews; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. And Esther, too, was very sorry, because her dear friend Mordecai was in so much trouble. She sent a message to him, and gave him new raiment, and asked him to put off his sackcloth, and to be comforted; for Esther did not know at first what made Mordecai so unhappy. When the raiment was sent, he would not receive it, nor put off his sackcloth, nor take comfort; he still stayed where he was, weeping as he did before; and the messenger went back, and told Esther. Then Esther

called one of her servants, who was named Hatach, and told him to go again, and ask Mordecai why he wept so bitterly. So the servant went and gave him the queen's message; and then Mordecai told Hatach of the king's command, and gave him one of the letters to show to Esther, and sent a message, to beg her to go to the king, and ask him to spare her people.

When Hatach told Esther what Mordecai had said, and what he wished, she was in very great difficulty and trouble. Was she unwilling to ask the king to spare the Jews? No; but she felt afraid at first, because there was a law in Persia, forbidding any one, who was not called, to come before the king. Whoever dared to disobey this law, was put to death, unless the king held out his sceptre,—then the person was forgiven. Ahasuerus had not called Esther for thirty days; and she said to Hatach, "How can I go to the king when he has not sent for me? I shall make him angry; perhaps he will put me to death, and what will become of my poor people then?" So Hatach went back again to Mordecai, and told him what Esther said. But Mordecai would not despair. He knew that it was right to do all he could to save himself and his people; and he trusted that God would deliver them now, as he had often delivered them before. So Mordecai sent another message to queen Esther. He told her it was her duty to go and speak to the king; and that she could not have God's blessing if she did not. And then he encouraged her too. He told her, that he believed that God

would deliver His people, and had made her queen that she might be able to speak to Ahasuerus, and intercede for them when they had no other friend.

As soon as Esther heard this, she determined to do what Mordecai desired. But she remembered that there was another king, greater and more powerful than Ahasuerus, whose help she must ask first. Who was this great king? God Himself. He is the king over all the world. The greatest earthly kings can only do what He permits. Esther knew that He could, if He pleased, make Ahasuerus kind and merciful; and she determined to pray to this great God, and ask His help, and then go to the king. So she called the messengers again, and told them to return this answer to Mordecai: "Go, and gather together all the Jews that are in the city, and fast and pray for me night and day; and I and my maidens will fast and pray too, and afterwards I will go and speak to the king. If God please, He will answer my prayer, and protect me, and deliver my people; and if not, I am ready and willing to die."

Mordecai was glad to have this message. He saw now that Esther was determined to do her duty; and that she would do it in the right way, asking help from God. Mordecai had much faith in God, and trusted in Him for deliverance in this time of danger. He remembered that "God is a very present help in trouble." *Psalms* xli. 1.

Then Mordecai called all the Jews in the city, and told them what Esther was going to do; and asked them to fast and pray for her,

as she wished, the three days before she went to the king. The Jews were willing to do this; so they, and Mordecai, and Esther, all fasted, and wept, and prayed before God. It was a solemn time. The queen and her maidens were fasting, and weeping, and praying in the palace; and Mordecai and the Jews in the city; none of them ate or drank for three days. But what a comfort it was for these poor people to have God

for their friend now! When we are in trouble, we ought to do what they did. We may never have such trouble as Esther had; but very often we may be in danger and difficulty; and then we should tell all our sorrows to God, and ask help from Him. And He is willing to hear us; He says, "Call upon me in the time of trouble, and I will deliver thee." *Psalms* i. 15.

 CCXX.

ESTHER'S FEAST.



HE three days passed, and the time came for Esther to go to the king. She was going to the king when he had not called for her; and perhaps he might not hold out the sceptre to her, and then she would be put to death. This was a fearful thought; but Esther was determined to go, trusting in God, and she knew that nothing could hurt her without His permission.

The king was sitting upon his throne in his palace, when Esther came in. She looked anxiously to see if he would hold out the sceptre that she might know whether she should live or die. When Ahasuerus looked up, and saw Esther standing in the court so humbly and timidly, he pitied and loved her, and held out his sceptre and called her to him. So Esther went, and touched the sceptre. But how thankful she felt now! The king was not angry, but pleased with her; he did not command her to be put to death, but

smiled, and said, "What wilt thou, queen Esther? Ask what thou wilt, and it shall be given thee." But Esther did not like to tell Ahasuerus about the Jews directly. She wanted time to think of her petition, and to ask God to give her courage and wisdom; so she only said, "If it please the king, let the king and Haman come to-day to the feast I have made ready for them." Why did Esther ask Haman to the feast? Did she not know what a cruel, wicked man he was? Yes, she knew this; and soon she meant to tell the king all the truth about Haman, but now Esther wished to be wise and cautious in all she did, not quick and hasty. God had given Esther wisdom, because she had asked Him for it. When we have very difficult work to do, we ought, like this good queen, to pray for wisdom to do it rightly. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him." *James* i. 5.

Did Ahasuerus promise to come

to the feast? Yes; he went, and Haman went with him. Esther was very attentive to the king, and tried to please him; and Ahasuerus liked everything that he saw, and everything that Esther said and did. While they were at the feast, the king said again to Esther, "What is thy petition? What is thy desire? I will give it thee, whatever it may be." Did Esther ask then that the poor Jews might be spared? No, the time was not yet come; she wanted to pray and think about her petition still more; so she said, "If it please the king, let the king and Haman come to-morrow to the feast I shall prepare for them; and then I will make my petition, as the king hath said."

Haman felt proud of his honor in being invited twice, with the king, to Esther's feast; and he went home, that day, thinking very much of himself. As he passed the king's gate, he saw Mordecai sitting there; and Mordecai did not bow nor stand up, nor show him any honor. This made Haman very angry; but he tried to hide his anger. When he came to his house, he called his wife and his friends, and boasted to them of his glory and his riches.

He said, "The king likes me better than any of his princes and servants; and queen Esther honors me too. I was at her feast to-day, and she has invited me to come again to-morrow with the king. I am the only man who is so honored; but yet all my riches, and honors, and glory, cannot content me, while I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." Then Zeresh, Haman's wife, answered, "Do not be vexed about this. Let us make a very high gallows; and to-morrow speak thou to the king, that Mordecai may be hanged upon the gallows; and then go thou in merrily to the feast." Haman was very much pleased with what cruel Zeresh said, and commanded that the gallows should be made directly. But could Haman feel happy then? No; he had riches, and honors, and—what pleased him better—the hope of revenge on the morrow; but all these things could not give him peace nor comfort. Haman's heart was full of evil thoughts; anger, and passion, and revenge, and murder too, were there, and God's curse, and God's frown were upon him. Haman's pride had grown into dreadful wickedness.

CCXXI.

THE RESTLESS NIGHT.

THAT night, when king Ahasuerus lay down upon his bed, he could not sleep. He was not ill, nor in pain, nor trouble; all was pleasant and comfortable around him, but still, when he shut his eyes, and tried to rest, he found he could not; his sleep was gone. It was God who made Ahasuerus so restless and wakeful that night, and we shall soon know why.

Sleep is a great blessing. Our poor weak bodies grow weary after a long, busy day; and it is very pleasant to have a comfortable bed to lie upon, and quiet sleep to refresh us when we are tired, and to awake in the morning strong and well again. How thankful we should be to God who gives us these blessings, and keeps us safely in the long dark night! David says, "I lay me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." *Psalm* iii. 5. But sometimes we cannot sleep. Like Ahasuerus we are wakeful and restless all night long. What should we do then? David also tells us what he did when he could not sleep. He says, "I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches." *Psalm* lxxiii. 6. And God's people like to do so too. When all is dark and quiet around, and no earthly friend can see them, then they love to remember that the eye of God is still upon them. He never slum-

bers nor sleeps: He is near to hear their prayers and their praises, and to love, and bless them, and to give them peace. Do you love God? Then you may be very happy in long wakeful nights, even when pain and illness make you restless. You may think of your kind Father in Heaven, who gives you many, many blessings; but who is sometimes pleased to take them away, for wise reasons which you cannot know now. And you may think too of that bright, happy world, to which you will go soon, if you are God's child, where there is no pain, no weariness.

But Ahasuerus had no pleasant thoughts like these to comfort him when he lay restless in his bed; so at last he arose and called his servants, and told them to bring a book and read to him. What book did he choose? He told his servants to bring that book in which the history of his kingdom, and the acts of the kings were written. The conspiracy which Mordecai discovered had been recorded there; but Ahasuerus had forgotten this long ago. The servant who read to the king soon came to the story of the conspiracy; and when Ahasuerus heard it, he remembered the faithfulness of Mordecai, and how useful he had been. Then Ahasuerus asked, "What honor has been done to Mordecai? How has he been rewarded?" The servants an-

answered, "Nothing has been done for him." Then the king said, "Mordecai must be rewarded now for his services. Go into the court and see who is there; I will consult with my friends how I may best honor this good man." So the servants went into the court, and there they found Haman; for he was coming very early to speak about Mordecai, and to ask the king to have him hanged upon the gallows which had been just made. The servants called Haman, and brought him to Ahasuerus; but Haman did not know why he was called, and Ahasuerus did not know what Haman wished to say, and why he was so early in the court.

When Haman came in, the king did not tell him at first, who the person was he was anxious to reward; he only said to him, "What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor?" Then Haman thought, "Who can this man be? It must be myself, for the king likes me better than any of the princes in his kingdom. And now he is going to honor me; what honor shall I choose? What shall I ask him to do for me?" When Haman had thought a little, he said, "Let the king's garments be brought, and his horse, and his golden crown; and then let one of the princes take the man whom the king is pleased to honor, and clothe him in the royal garments, and put the crown upon his head, and set him upon the horse, and bring him on horseback through the city; and let it be proclaimed aloud, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor." Then Ahasuerus said, "The man whom I wish

to honor is Mordecai the Jew. He did me a kind service a long time ago, and he had no reward. Now, do as thou hast said. Make haste, and take the royal garments, and the crown, and the horse; and bring Mordecai the Jew, who is sitting by the gate, and let him ride through the city in triumph; and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honor."

Haman felt much disappointed to hear all this, and very angry too; but he could not disobey the king, nor accuse Mordecai now; so he went out and called Mordecai, and clothed him in the royal garments, and put him upon the king's horse, and led him through the city, proclaiming before him what Ahasuerus had commanded. But when all was over, Haman hastened home to his house, full of sorrow, and told Zeresh all that had happened. And did she comfort him in his disappointment? No; she and her friends were as much frightened and vexed as Haman was; and they all said, "Thou shalt not have any power against Mordecai, but shalt surely fall before him." This troubled Haman still more; and he waited sad and sorrowful, till the time came for him to go to Esther's feast. But how did Mordecai feel now? He must have felt very thankful to God, who was giving him so much favor with the king; but Mordecai was not proud of his honors, like wicked Haman. Mordecai was humble, as all God's servants must be; and when he returned from riding through the city, he went again to the king's gate, and attended to his duties there, without

boasting of his honors, or saying one unkind word to his enemy Haman.

And now we can tell why God had taken away sleep from the king that night. It was because the time was come, the right and best time, for Mordecai to be delivered. Esther, and Mordecai, and the Jews, had been many days praying, and fasting, and weeping, and no deliverance came; and perhaps sometimes they had thought that God would not hear their prayers nor save them from their enemies. But he had heard them all the time; and just at the right moment, before

wicked Haman came in, God made the king restless and wakeful, and put it into his heart to ask to have the book read which inclined him to be kind to Mordecai. God does not always answer our prayers how and when *we* please, but how and when *He* pleases. We are very ignorant, and cannot tell what is best for us; but He knows what we need, and the right time for giving it to us. Then let us trust this kind God, and wait patiently for His answer to our prayers. "Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." *Habakkuk* ii. 3.

CCXXII.

HAMAN PUNISHED.



THE king came to the feast as he promised, and brought Haman with him. Ahasuerus had not forgotten Esther's petition, and now he said to her again, "What is thy petition, queen Esther? It shall be granted thee." You have never spoken to an earthly king; perhaps you have never even seen one; but there is a king greater, much greater, than Ahasuerus, to whom you may speak every day, and who promises to grant your requests. You know who this great king is;—Christ himself. He is the "King of kings, and Lord of lords." He invites you to come to Him, and ask Him for what you want: and He will never send you

away. He says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." *John* vi. 37. And the Lord Jesus Christ promises to give better things than Ahasuerus could. He can give pardon, and peace, and the Holy Spirit, and eternal life in Heaven. He is willing, too, to give these good gifts; He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you." *Matthew* vii. 7. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." *Matthew* xxi. 22.

But what did Esther say when the king spoke kindly to her? she had now no need to fear; Ahasuerus had promised to grant her request, and his heart was kindly inclined to the Jews: God had made it so. Esther now felt that the

right time was come for making her petition; so she said at once, "If it please the king, let my life be given at my petition, and my people at my request; for it is commanded, that I and my people should be all destroyed and slain." The king wondered very much when he heard what Esther said, and asked angrily, "What enemy of the people has dared to do this?" Then Esther turned to Haman, and said, "This wicked Haman is the man who is the enemy of my people, the Jews; and he has accused them to the king, and asked for their destruction." Then Ahasuerus rose up angrily, and went out into the palace-garden; and Haman fell down before Esther, and begged for his life, for he saw that he was in very great danger. But there was no hope for Haman now. The king soon came back, and gave commandment to his servants to cover Haman's face, which was the sign for execution. As they were carrying Haman away, one of the king's servants said, "Haman has made a gallows to hang Mordecai upon; and it is now in Haman's house." So Ahasuerus commanded

that Haman should be hanged upon his own gallows, which he had made for Mordecai.

This was the dreadful end of this proud and cruel man! And all people who live like Haman will come to an end as dreadful as his, if they do not repent before it is too late. Wicked men are often punished in this world. They may be in great favor and prosperity for many years; but, at last, their deceitfulness is found out, as Haman's was, and then they lose their friends, and their honor, and, perhaps, their life, and die in disgrace and misery. But, sometimes, the wicked are not punished in this world. Their fellow-creatures may not find out their crimes; so they escape, perhaps, all their lives. But God takes notice of these wicked people. He knows all their sinful actions, and thoughts too, and writes every one of them in the book of His remembrance. And at the day of judgment, when the book will be read, what will become of rebellious impenitent sinners? The Bible tells us,—“The transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off.” *Psalms xxxvii. 39.*

CCXXIII.

THE JEWS DELIVERED.



THAT day, Ahasuerus gave Haman's house to queen Esther; and he called Mordecai, and gave him the ring which Haman had worn, and honored him very much. Ahasuerus knew that Esther was a Jewess, and that Mordecai was her relation, because she had told him. There was no need to keep this a secret any longer. But Esther had not yet all she wanted; so she went to the king again, and when he held out the sceptre, she said, "If it please the king, let it be written to reverse the letters which Haman wrote to destroy the Jews. How can I bear to see the evil that shall come upon my people? How can I bear to see my family destroyed?" Ahasuerus was very willing to do as Esther wished; so he told her to desire Mordecai to write letters in the king's name, to reverse the cruel command of Haman; and to send them all to the provinces of the kingdom. Then Mordecai wrote the letters and sealed them with the king's ring, and sent them by post on horses, and mules, and camels. In these letters, the king commanded the Jews to gather themselves together on the thirteenth of the month of Adar; and to be ready to defend themselves, and to fight, and slay, and destroy all their enemies who should try to hurt them. Then Mordecai went out of the palace, to tell the good news to all

the poor sorrowing Jews in the city. He was dressed in royal garments, blue and white, with a great crown of gold upon his head. That was a happy day for the Jews! They threw off their sackcloth, and wiped away their tears, and began to rejoice, and to praise God who had done such wonderful things for them. All was feasting, and joy, and gladness, among the Jews throughout the land, wherever the posts came! *We* may be glad too when we read about their happiness; and let the story teach us to trust in their God in all our troubles; for He is the same kind and powerful God now, that He was then.

At last, the day came in which the Jews were to have been slain. Their enemies had hoped to destroy them all; but God had determined to deliver His people, and they were safe. The Jews gathered themselves together, as Ahasuerus commanded; and the rulers of the provinces helped them to fight against their enemies, and to destroy those who hated them. Very many of these cruel enemies were slain; and amongst them, the ten sons of Haman, who were hanged upon the gallows which their father had made.

When all their enemies were subdued, the Jews made a great feast on the fifteenth day of the month Adar. It was a very joyful day; and they determined to keep it every year, that they might not for-

get their great and wonderful deliverance. This yearly feast the Jews call the feast of Purim. They were right to keep this day in remembrance. When God sends us any great mercy, when He delivers us from danger, or death, or trouble, then we too ought to remember His goodness to us; and every time the day returns, we should thank Him for His mercies, and say as David did, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." *Psalm ciii. 2, 4.*

We read very little more in the Bible about Mordecai and Esther. Mordecai became a very great man, and was much honored and loved by the king. He had great riches, and great power; and he made the best use of all he had; he tried to do good with it. This is the right use to make of money and power. We should not be selfish, and think

only of ourselves; but remember, as Mordecai did, to be kind to others, and to try to do them good. St. Paul says, "Charge them that are rich, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute." 1 *Timothy* vi. 17, 18. Haman had tried very hard to destroy Mordecai; but now Haman was dead, and all his sons were dead, and Mordecai was living in happiness, and honor, and safety. Why was this? Because Mordecai trusted in God. God never forsakes those who trust in Him. They may be in sorrow for a little time, but deliverance will come at last. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace. The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; He is their strength in the time of trouble. The Lord shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them because they trust in Him." *Psalm xxxvii. 37, 39, 40.*

COXXIV.

EZRA'S PRAYER.



WE have not read about the Jews in Jerusalem for a long time. What were they doing? Soon after the deliverance of Mordecai, while Ahasuerus was still reigning in Persia, many more of the captives went from Babylon to their own home in Canaan. One of these Jews was named Ezra. He was a Levite, a priest, and a scribe

or writer of God's law. Ezra was a very learned man; and, what is better, he was a very good man too; he loved and served God. When the king gave him leave to go to Jerusalem, he felt very glad; for he wished to see his beloved country again, and to teach his people there the holy law of God, which he knew and loved so well. Ahasuerus was very kind to Ezra, and the other

Jews, and gave them all the silver and gold they could find in Babylon, to buy offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem. God took care of Ezra and his friends, and brought them all safely to Jerusalem. They had many enemies; but these good men knew who their best friend was, who could protect them from every danger; and they sought Him on their journey, and He heard their prayer, and took care of them. When we go on a journey, we may meet with many dangers; and therefore we should never set off without first asking God's blessing and protection. We should say, as Moses did, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." *Exodus xxxiii. 15.*

When Ezra came to Jerusalem, he heard much that made him very sad. His people were not living in the fear of God. Many of them had mingled with the idolatrous people of Canaan, and married into their families, and were beginning to learn their wicked ways. This was wrong. God's people were to be a holy people; they were to keep away from the heathen nations around, and to have nothing to do with them. God had always commanded this; but His people had often disobeyed Him before, and made Him angry, and now they were doing so again. Ezra was a faithful and kind friend to these forgetful, disobedient people. He would not let them do what was so wicked and displeasing to God; but reproved and warned them. When Ezra first heard what the people had done, he rent his clothes, and tore off his hair, and sat down full of trouble. Then some of the

people who truly served God, came to him, and sat down by him, and wept too. Why were they all so unhappy? Because their brethren had sinned against God. It is sad to see those around us living in wickedness; forgetful of that God who has been so kind, and done so much for them. But there is one thing we can do when we feel sorry for wicked people; we can pray God to pity and forgive them. And this was what Ezra did. In the evening, when the sacrifice was offered, he arose, and fell on his knees, and spread out his hands unto God, and prayed. Ezra confessed to God, how great had been the people's sin. He said, "O my God, I am ashamed to lift up my face unto thee, for our iniquities are very great. Thou hast given us deliverance, and let some of us escape, that we might build the temple again, and the walls of Jerusalem. But what shall we say after this? We have been very ungrateful to thee for all thy mercies. We have forsaken thy commandments; we have mingled with the people of the nations around us, and learned their evil ways. Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserved, and given us great deliverance; but if we again transgress, we shall make thee still more angry, and how can we hope for mercy then? Wouldst thou not be angry with us till thou hast destroyed us; so that there should be no more deliverance nor escape? O Lord God of Israel, thou art righteous; behold we are before thee in our trespasses; for we cannot stand before thee because of this."

This was Ezra's humble confes-

sion of his own sins, and of his people's sins. When we read it, we ought to remember that we too have sinned against God, as these Jews had. We have often forgotten Him, and loved the things of the world better than holy things; and disobeyed many of His commands.

What should we do when we remember all these sins? We should do what Ezra did, confess them humbly to God, and ask His forgiveness; and we know that he is ready to forgive all those who ask for pardon, for His dear Son's sake.

CCXXV.

THE REPENTANCE OF THE PEOPLE.



WHEN Ezra had finished his prayer, a great many of the people came to him, to the door of God's house. They were, like Ezra, sorry for the sinful things which had been done, and they came weeping very bitterly. They said, "We have sinned against our God: but there is yet hope for us. We will make a covenant with our God; and promise to put away all that is displeasing to Him, and mingle ourselves with the people of the nations no more. Arise and help us to do this, and we will be with thee." So Ezra arose, and went into a house; but he ate no bread, and drank no water; he was still mourning and fasting, because of the transgression of his people.

Then Ezra made a proclamation, that all the captives who had returned from Babylon, should come to Jerusalem in three days; and that those who did not obey this command, should forfeit all their possessions, and be sent away in disgrace. The people were willing

to attend to this proclamation. In three days they were all gathered together at Jerusalem; and they sat in the street by the house of God. All looked unhappy. Why? Because they were thinking about their sins, and how they had displeased God. The rain too was falling heavily, and the sky was black with clouds, and there was no pleasant sunshine to warm and cheer them; all was gloomy. Then Ezra arose, and told the people of their sins, and asked them to make confession to God, and to pray for pardon. The people were very penitent; and wished to have God's forgiveness and blessing again; and they cried with a loud voice, "As thou hast said, so we must do." They not only confessed their sin, but they were willing to put it away too. They separated from their idolatrous friends and companions, and made a covenant with God, and promised to serve Him faithfully with all their hearts.

This was the right way of showing that they were truly penitent

Some people, when they are reproved for doing wrong, say they are sorry, and then go away, and do the same things again. This is not the true sorrow for sin which God desires. It is not "godly sorrow," which "worketh repentance to salvation." 2 Cor. vii. 10. Those who are *really* penitent, do as the people did of whom we have just been reading. They are not only sorry for their

sin, and confess it, and ask for pardon; but they pray for grace too, that they may be enabled by the help of the Holy Spirit, to resist and overcome it. God promises to forgive those who are thus truly penitent, and turn to Him with all their hearts. "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy." *Proverbs xxviii. 13.*

CCXXVI.

N E H E M I A H .



AD all the captives now returned to Jerusalem? No; some still remained in Persia. Among them was a good man named Nehemiah. He was cup-bearer to the king Artaxerxes, the same king who is called Ahasuerus in the history of Esther. He was still reigning; and, perhaps, Esther and Mordecai were living too; but this the Bible does not tell us. Nehemiah was far off from his country; but he still loved it very much; and when he saw any of his friends who had been there, he used to ask them anxiously about Jerusalem.

One day Nehemiah was told that the people in Jerusalem were in great trouble; and that the walls and gates were broken down, and burnt with fire. This was sad news for Nehemiah. When he heard it, he "sat down, and wept, and mourned many days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of Heaven."

Like many other good people, of whom we have often read in the Bible, Nehemiah had a friend to comfort him in all his trouble; and that friend was God. Nehemiah confessed before God all his own sins, and the sins of the people; and acknowledged that they deserved punishment for their forgetfulness of Him. But then Nehemiah asked God to remember His promise made to Moses, many, many years before, that He would gather His people from all countries, and bring them to their own land again. God had not forgotten His promise; He never does forget; but it was right in Nehemiah to speak of it in his prayer, because this showed his faith and trust in God. God likes us to remind Him of His own promises when we pray. Nehemiah prayed, too, that he might find favor and mercy with the king. He was going to make a petition to Artaxerxes; and, like Esther, he

would not do it without first asking help and wisdom from God.

It was a long time before Nehemiah could speak to the king; but at last he was called to give him wine; for this was the duty of the cup-bearer. Nehemiah looked very sad when he came before the king. His sorrowful thoughts about Jerusalem made him so; but Artaxerxes could not tell Nehemiah's thoughts, so he wondered what made him unhappy, and asked, "Why is thy face so sad? Thou art not sick; this is nothing but sorrow of heart; tell me what has happened to vex and trouble thee?" Then Nehemiah felt very much afraid; but he prayed to God in his heart, and asked for wisdom to enable him to speak as he ought to the king; and then he answered, "Why should I not be sad, when the city of my fathers lieth waste, and the gates of it are

burnt with fire?" God was pleased to hear Nehemiah's prayer; and he inclined Artaxerxes to be kind to the Jews, and willing to help them. The king asked Nehemiah what he wished; and Nehemiah again prayed to the God of Heaven, and then said, "If it please the king, let me be sent unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers, that I may build it." Artaxerxes asked Nehemiah how long the journey would be, and when he would return to Persia; so Nehemiah told him; and then the king gave him leave to go. And Artaxerxes wrote some letters to the governors who were in Judah, and commanded them to let Nehemiah go to Jerusalem, and build the walls of the city. Then Nehemiah thanked his God who had made the king so kind to him; and took leave of his friends in Persia, and set off on his journey.

CCXXVII

THE WALLS BUILT.



AS Nehemiah glad to go to Jerusalem again? Yes; but he had many dangers, and difficulties, and enemies to vex and trouble him. There were two wicked men, governors in Judah, who hated the Jews very much, and determined to do all they could to hurt Nehemiah, and prevent him from building the walls of Jerusalem. The names of these men were Tobiah and Sanballat.

Nehemiah came safe to Jerusalem, and stayed there quietly three days. All that time, he was thinking what he could do for his poor people and country; and asked God to teach and help him. One night, Nehemiah arose, and called a few of his friends, and went out secretly to see the city. He told no one where he was going, nor why he went; he had many thoughts in his heart, but they were only known to God. And what did Nehemiah see as he rode along? He saw the walls of Jerusalem lying in ruins upon the ground; and the gates broken down, and burnt with fire. The temple was built; but the poor Jews had so many enemies, and so many troubles, that they could not worship God as they wished, nor live in peace in their own land. Nehemiah felt sad when he looked around, and saw everything so waste and desolate. It was night, and all was quiet; the people were asleep; they could not see

Nehemiah, nor comfort him in his sorrow, But Nehemiah remembered, that there was an eye upon him still, which could see even the thoughts of his heart in that dark night. One was watching over Jerusalem, and keeping it, when no earthly friend could; for "He that keepeth Israel, neither slumbereth nor sleepeth." *Psalms* cxxi. 4. Yes; God's eye was upon Nehemiah, and upon his people, and his city too; and this thought comforted him in his trouble. When we are travelling in the long dark night, or when we are lying awake upon our beds, how pleasant it is to remember, that God is near, and that He can see and protect us; for "the darkness and the light are both alike to Him." *Psalms* cxxxix. 12.

When Nehemiah had gone round the walls, and mourned over his poor desolate country, he returned; but he did not sit down to weep, and do nothing for his city and people. No; he called some of the people, and told them all the thoughts which God had put into his heart, and how kind the king had been in giving him leave to go to Jerusalem. Then the people were encouraged to begin to work; and they said, "Let us rise up, and build." "So they strengthened their hands for this good work." Sanballat, and Tobiah, and others, laughed at the Jews; but Nehemiah told his enemies, that the work

had to do was the work of God, and that He would prosper and bless it. So the Jews went on building, and did not attend to what their enemies said.

When Sanballat saw that the walls were almost finished, he felt very angry; but he pretended to despise what the people were doing, and said to his friends, "What can these poor weak Jews do? How can they strengthen themselves? What power have they to build up

their city, and to settle in it again?" Then Tobiah answered, "If they do, the building will be so weak, that a fox might break down their stone wall." So these wicked men laughed at the Jews; but still the work went on, and, at last, the walls were finished. God was with His people, who trusted in Him, and He would not suffer their enemies to destroy what He had commanded to be done.

CCXXVIII.

THE DEFENCE OF NEHEMIAH.

WHEN the enemies of the Jews heard that the walls were built, they conspired together to come and fight against Jerusalem. But Nehemiah was told of this conspiracy, and he prepared to defend himself. First, he prayed to God, and asked help from Him; for Nehemiah knew that nothing could hurt him and his people if God protected him. Then he armed some of his servants with swords, and spears, and shields, and bows. The rest went on with the building; but they all held a sword in one hand, while they worked with the other, that they might be ready to defend themselves, if the enemy should come. They kept watch too, all day and all night; and a man with a trumpet stood by Nehemiah, to sound an alarm, if there was any danger, and call the people

together in a moment. So all was ready; and then Nehemiah spoke to the people, and said, "Be not afraid; remember the Lord is great and terrible; and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses." Then the people felt encouraged again, and went on willingly with their work.

Nehemiah was right to take so much care to defend himself and his people. It is our duty, when we are in danger, to do what we can to save ourselves. But we must remember, as Nehemiah did, that all we do will be of no use without the blessing of God; and begin by asking His help and guidance. Then we may feel safe, in all dangers and troubles. And we may learn another lesson from this story. We have not such enemies as the Jews had to fight against; but we have enemies of another kind, and we must pre-

pare to resist them as Nehemiah did. You know what these are. Satan, and the wicked world, and our own sinful hearts. How are we to resist them? When Jesus was speaking to his disciples, about temptation, he told them to "watch and pray." This is what we ought to do. We should "watch," that Satan may not take us by surprise, and "pray," that we may be enabled to resist and overcome him. We must have armor too, but not such armor as Nehemiah and his people used. We want armor for our *souls*. God has provided it for us; and He tells us in His word what it is. "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the

breastplate of righteousness; taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication." *Ephesians* vi. 11, 18. This teaches us how we are to fight against the enemies of our souls. Not trusting in our own strength, but in the strength of Christ alone; and seeking it from Him in truth, and faith, and prayer. And, if we do this, we may be sure that we shall have the victory at last; for the Bible says, "We are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us." *Romans* viii. 37.

CCXXIX.

NEHEMIAH'S KINDNESS.



NEHEMIAH had not only his cruel enemies to trouble him; his own people vexed him too. Some of the Jews were rich, others were poor; but those who were rich were unkind to their brethren, and took away their lands, and their vineyards, and their oliveyards. So the poor people came to Nehemiah, for he was the governor, and told him all their sorrows. Nehemiah was angry when he heard what had been done; and he called the nobles and rulers, and reproved

them. He might have punished these selfish people; but he liked better to speak to them gently, and make them feel that they had done wrong. So he said to them, "It is not good that you do: ought you not to walk in the fear of God? Restore to them, I pray you, this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, and the money which you have taken from them." The nobles attended to all Nehemiah said. They did not try to excuse themselves; for they felt that they had done

wrong, and were very sorry, and willing to restore the possessions of their poor brethren. They said to Nehemiah, "So will we do." Then he made them promise; and they all answered, "Amen," and praised the Lord; "and the people did according to this promise." So all ended well; and, we may hope, that the nobles did not again oppress their poor brethren. Nehemiah himself set them a good example; for he fed many of the Jews at his table every day, and was kind and generous to all; and he did this "because of the fear of God."

God is kind and merciful, and He commands us to be so too. He shows His love in all that He gives

us; but He showed it most when He gave His Son to die for our sins. Then, "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1 *John* iv. 11. And Jesus Christ is full of love. When He was upon earth He "went about doing good." There was no unkindness, no selfishness in Him, and if we are the servants of Christ, we shall try to be like Him. He says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." *John* xiii. 35. Let us pray, then, to have this love put into our hearts. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit which God promises to give to those who ask Him.

COXXX.

THE PLOTS OF SANBALLAT.



SANBALLAT and Tobiah could not fight against the Jews; but they tried to trouble and hinder them in their work. Sometimes they sent for Nehemiah to come and see them. This was tempting him to be idle, that the building might be stopped. But Nehemiah said, "I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down. Why should the work cease, while I leave it, and come down to you?" They sent to him four times; but Nehemiah gave always the same answer; so at last they left off, and tried to trouble him in another way. We may learn here, a

lesson of industry from Nehemiah. We have not walls and cities to build, as he had, but we all have some business to do. And how should we do it? Very quickly, and very diligently; because we have much to do, and very little time to do it in. "Whatsoever thine hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." *Ecclesiastes* ix. 10.

But how did Sanballat trouble the Jews now? He sent a letter to Nehemiah, open, that every one might read it. This letter told him that he was accused of wishing to

make himself king; and that the Jews were accused of rebellion; and Sanballat asked Nehemiah to come and consult with him what should be done. There was no truth in this letter; and Nehemiah was too wise to be deceived by it; so he sent to Sanballat, saying, "There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart." So this plot could not hurt Nehemiah, and Sanballat was disappointed again. But soon after, these cruel enemies tried to trouble and deceive Nehemiah once more. They now hired a false prophet, named Shemaiah, to help them. Shemaiah shut himself up in his house, and called Nehemiah, and said to him, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple; and let us shut the doors of the temple; for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night they will come to slay thee." But Nehemiah knew that he was doing God's work, and that he must not forsake that work; and he remembered too, that God could preserve him from danger. So he answered, "Should such a man as I flee? I will not go in." And Nehemiah found afterwards, that all Shemaiah had said was false. It was only a plot of

Tobiah and Sanballat to get him into the temple, to do him some hurt. So Nehemiah was preserved by doing his duty, and trusting to God's protection.

When we have duties to do, we ought not to leave them hastily. It is God who places us where we are, and gives us these duties to do; and He will help and protect us in danger, if we trust all to Him. Such men as Nehemiah need never fear. They may say, "The Lord is on our side; we will not fear; what can man do unto us?" *Psalms* cxviii. 6. Enemies may perhaps trouble, and persecute, and even kill them; but they can do no more; they cannot hurt the soul. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." *Matthew* x. 28. The wicked *may* fear; for they have no God to protect and bless them. Wherever they go, God's curse is upon them; and they can have no comfort in trouble, and sorrow, and death. In times of danger, we see the wicked full of fear. They are afraid even when there is no real danger. "The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth; but the righteous is bold as a lion." *Proverbs* xxviii. 1.

CCXXXI.

THE LAW EXPLAINED.

THE wall was now finished; the Jews had built it in fifty-two days. All the plots of their enemies had failed, and those enemies were obliged to confess that the work was God's, and that they could not hinder it. If God determines to do a thing, all the wicked men in the world cannot prevent that thing from being done. God promised the poor captive Jews in Babylon, that they should return to their own land, and build their temple and their city again; and so it was.

It was now almost time for Nehemiah to return to Persia; and he appointed his brother Hanani to be ruler over Jerusalem, while he was away. But before he went, he counted the people, and found the number to be 42,360, besides a great many servants. So they came, and dwelt in their cities. Then all the people gathered themselves together to pray, and praise the Lord. Ezra, the good priest, of whom we read before, brought out the book of the law, and stood upon a pulpit of wood, to read aloud to the people. As soon as he opened the book, they all stood up; and when he blessed the Lord, the people answered, "Amen, amen;" and lifted up their hands, and bowed their heads, and worshipped God. Then Ezra, and the Levites, read and explained the law, and made the people understand it. They all wept when they heard

the law. They trembled and were afraid, because they remembered how often they had disobeyed the commands of God, and how much they had displeased Him. But Nehemiah and Ezra comforted them, and told them not to mourn nor weep, for it was a holy day unto the Lord, and a day of thankfulness and praise. Nehemiah said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto the Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength." They were not only to rejoice themselves, but to try to make others happy too. So the people wiped away their tears, and began to rejoice in God, because now "they understood the words that were declared unto them."

It was now the time for the feast of tabernacles. This feast should have been kept every year; but the people had grown forgetful of their holy things, and had not attended to it for a very long time. But now, they wished to be obedient to God, and to do all He had commanded them; so they cut down branches from the pine, and the olive, and the myrtle, and the palm-trees, and made themselves booths, upon the roofs of their houses, and in the courts of the temple, and in the streets; and sat under the booths, rejoicing, and praising God, seven days.

Every day, Ezra read to them

from the book of the law of God ; and on the eighth day, they all assembled to offer sacrifices and burnt-offerings to the Lord. After this, they kept a very solemn fast. They put on sackcloth, and threw dust upon their heads, and gathered themselves together to pray and confess their sins. They spent many hours, partly in prayer, and partly in reading the law. The Levites called upon the people to stand up and bless the Lord, and then offered a prayer aloud for them all. They thanked God who had, so many years before, chosen Abraham, and given him the land of Canaan for a possession. They remembered the wonderful things God had done for Abraham's seed, in delivering them from Egypt, and preserving them in the wilderness, and bringing them to the promised

land ; and they blessed and praised Him for all. Then they confessed the sins of their fathers ; their rebellion, and disobedience, and forgetfulness of God ; and acknowledged that they deserved all they had suffered so many years in Babylon. And lastly, the Levites thanked God for bringing them home to their own land again, and made a covenant to obey the Lord, and to serve him faithfully. This covenant was written and sealed by the Levites, and the priests, and the princes. It was a solemn promise to keep themselves apart from the wicked people around them ; and to attend in all things to the commands of God ; and this promise was written and sealed, to make it more sure, and to impress it upon the minds of the people.

CCXXXII.

NEHEMIAH'S RETURN.



NEHEMIAH returned to Persia, but after some time, he came again to Jerusalem. And how did he find the people ? Were they still living in the fear of God, and trying to please Him in all they did ? No ; Nehemiah was sorry to find that they had done some things which were very wrong, while he was away. The priest who ruled over God's house had become friendly with Tobiah, the wicked enemy of the Jews ; and given him

a large room in the court of the temple, where the holy things ought to have been kept. And Nehemiah found some of the people making wine, and carrying burdens, and buying and selling, on the Sabbath day ; and some had mingled themselves with the idolatrous nations around. All these things vexed Nehemiah. He commanded that Tobiah should be sent away from the room in God's house ; and that the holy vessels, and the offerings, and the incense, should be brought

in. The evening before the Sabbath, he commanded the gates of the city to be shut: and he placed his servants there to prevent them from being opened, and any burdens from being brought in. Then he spoke very solemnly to the nobles, and the priests, and the Levites, and told them, that if they disobeyed the commands of God, they would bring evil upon their country, as their fathers had done so many years before. So the people attended to what their wise and faithful governor said, and separated themselves from the idolatrous nations around, and sold and bought no more on the Sabbath. Nehemiah loved his country; and he showed his love for it in the best way,—by teaching the people to live in the fear of God; for only those countries can be truly happy in which God is known, and feared, and loved.

The Bible tells us no more about this holy man Nehemiah. He himself wrote the account of these things which we have just read, and he ended that account with this beautiful prayer, "Remember

me, O my God, for good." Nehemiah had been working many years in God's service, and he humbly prayed that God would not forget him, nor the work that he had done. But Nehemiah did not think that he deserved any reward for his services. He well knew that the best and holiest people deserve nothing: they have done only their duty after all, and they have done it very imperfectly too; for all their works have been mingled with sin. And therefore Jesus says, "When ye have done all, say, we are unprofitable servants." *Luke xvii. 10.* Yet God is so gracious, that He promises He will accept the services of His people, if done for His sake, and from love to Him. He will not forget their "work of faith, and labor of love," but will say to them in the day of judgment, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." *Matt. xxv. 40.* Let us labor in the service and for the people of God, as Nehemiah did, and pray, like him, "Remember me, O my God, for good."

CCXXXIII.

THE PROPHET MALACHI.

THERE was only one prophet more after Nehemiah's time. His name was Malachi. He spoke to the people of the Lord Jesus Christ who was now soon coming; and of John the Baptist, who should first appear to prepare the way before Him. Malachi warned the people of their sins, for there were many among them who had sinned very greatly against the Lord; and invited them to return to God, and told them what blessings they would have if they truly served Him. Some of them did truly serve Him, and Malachi had a message of comfort and encouragement for them. "They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." *Malachi* iii. 17, 18.

God attends to His people now as much as He did then. He still sees what we do, and hears what we say, and writes all down in the book of His remembrance. And a day is coming when that book will be opened and read. Then he will declare who has served Him, and who has served Him not, and will sepa-

rate the righteous from the wicked for ever. Are you ready for that great and dreadful day? Are you among those who truly love and serve God? If not, pray now, while there is time, that you may be made ready for death and judgment. Ask to have your sins washed away in the blood of Jesus Christ, and your heart made new by the Holy Spirit; that, when that dreadful day comes, you may be spared, and treasured up with the Lord's "jewels," His precious ones, in Heaven.

We have come now to the end of the Old Testament history. In the next part of the Bible, the New Testament, we shall read about the Lord Jesus Christ, of His birth, and life, and death; of all which He did and suffered to save sinners. But it is not in the New Testament only that we read of Christ. He Himself said to His disciples, "Search the Scriptures (the Old Testament Scriptures), for they testify of me." *John* v. 39. And after His resurrection, "He expounded unto them in *all* the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." *Luke* xxiv. 27. We read about Him in the types and sacrifices, for they all told us of Him. Yes, the whole Bible is about Jesus Christ: and it is this which makes it so very necessary, and so very precious to us; because, if we knew nothing of Christ, we could know nothing of salvation, and nothing of the

way to Heaven; for He is the only way.

Learn, then, to love the Bible more and more. Read it every day, and pray for the Holy Spirit to enable you to understand it. You may be young, and many troubles, and difficulties, and temptations,

may be before you. But the Bible tells how you may find comfort, and help, and wisdom, and happiness, and all you need. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? Even by ruling himself after thy word." *Psalm cxix. 9.*

FAMILY RECORD.

NAME.	DATE OF BIRTH.	DATE OF MARRIAGE.	DATE OF DEATH.
Joseph Smith	Aug. 27		
Lucinda Janima	Jun. 27		
Elwood Roy	Oct. 14		
Elmer Joseph	Nov. 30		Mar. 25
Alfred Lester	Aug. 24		

FAMILY RECORD.

NAME.	DATE OF BIRTH.	DATE OF MARRIAGE.	DATE OF DEATH.
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NEW TESTAMENT.

CCXXXIV.

THE COMING OF CHRIST.



MORE than four thousand years had passed away, since Adam and Eve were driven from the garden of Eden; and now the time was come for Jesus Christ to be born into the world, and to live, and suffer, and die there.

Who was the Lord Jesus Christ?

The eternal Son of God. When *Isaiah* prophesied of Him, he said, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." *Isaiah* ix. 6. Jesus, who was born a helpless child, and who lived as a poor man all his life on earth, was the great God, without beginning and without end; who knows all things, and sees all things, and can do all things.

But why did Jesus Christ come into the world? Why did He leave His Father's throne, and the glory and happiness of Heaven, to live

among sinful men, and to suffer, and bleed, and die? To save sinners. Man had sinned, and the punishment of sin is death. But God, in mercy, found out a way of escape for sinners; and that way is by Jesus Christ. We had sinned, and God must punish sin; Jesus promised to bear the punishment for us. God could accept only a perfect sacrifice, and perfect obedience; the sacrifice of Christ *was* perfect; for he was "without blemish and without spot;" he "did not sin." Therefore, God accepted him, and promised that those who truly believed, should have their sins washed away in the blood of His dear Son; and that the righteousness of Jesus should be imputed to them, and that they should be eternally saved. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." *John* iii. 16.

CCXXXV.

THE JEWS.

THE Jews were still living in their own land. They had a king to rule over them, named Herod; but they and their king were under the power of the emperor of Rome. The Romans were a very ambitious and powerful people; and they were now masters of almost all the world.

The Jews kept their feasts, and their sacrifices; but most of them served God only outwardly; they had no love, no faith, in their hearts. Some of these Jews were called Pharisees.

The Pharisees kept the law of Moses, and attended to all the ceremonies which he had commanded; and because they did this, they thought themselves very good, and boasted of their goodness, and stood in the street making long prayers, "to be seen of men." But they had no real love to God. They trusted in their own righteousness for salvation, not in the blood and righteousness of Christ; and therefore they could not be accepted by God. Jesus told his disciples, that if their righteousness was not greater than the righteousness of the Pharisees, they could

not enter Heaven; our own goodness will never take us there.

Others of Jews were called Sadducees. They were wicked men. They disbelieved many things which are written in the Bible, saying that there is no resurrection; neither angel nor spirit; but that, when we die, we shall pass quite away, and never live again.

But there were a few of the Jews who truly loved God, and read his word, and believed in it. They read there that Christ the Messiah should come; they knew that the time was now very near, and they were waiting and wishing for his appearance.

We, who are living now in a Christian country, have much more knowledge than the Jews had before Christ came. We have more of the Scriptures to read; we have the New Testament, which tells us so much of Jesus, and of the way to Heaven. But if we only *read* of Christ, and do not *love* Him; if we only *say* we are the people of God, and do not serve Him with our *hearts*, then we are not better than the Pharisees. God looks at the heart; and if *that* is not renewed by the Holy Spirit, we cannot be ready for Heaven.

CCXXXVI.

ZACHARIAS AND ELIZABETH.



HE prophets had foretold, that before the coming of Christ, a messenger should be sent to make ready the way before Him. Who was this messenger? We are now going to read about Him.

There were living at this time in Judea, two old people, a man and his wife, named Zacharias and Elizabeth. They were among the few Jews who truly served God, and were waiting and hoping for the coming of the Saviour. Zacharias was a priest, a Levite; one of those whose duty it was to offer sacrifices, and to burn incense in the temple of the Lord. Zacharias and Elizabeth had no son nor daughter to comfort them in their old age; yet they did not feel sorrowful nor desolate; for they had one friend who would never leave them, nor forsake them—that kind God who has said to his people, “Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you.” *Isaiah* xli. 4.

How pleasant it is to have God to comfort us when no earthly friends are near! Do you wish to have God for the friend of your old age? Then seek Him *now*. “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth;” and He will not forget you in your old age.

One day, when Zacharias was burning incense in the holy place

in the temple, an angel of the Lord appeared to him. He saw the angel standing on the right side of the altar of incense, close to him; and Zacharias was troubled, and very much afraid. But the angel spoke to him, and said, “Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall have a son, and thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.”

This was joyful news for Zacharias; but it was so wonderful, that he could not at first believe it; and he asked, “How shall I know this?” Was it right of Zacharias to doubt the truth of what the angel said? No; it was weakness of faith which made him doubt. He ought to have remembered, that “with God all things are possible,” and that nothing is too hard for Him.

The angel answered, “I am Gabriel. I stand before God, and He has sent me to tell thee this good news. And now thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, till the day when these things shall be done, because thou believest not my words.” So the angel departed, and Zacharias was struck dumb to punish him for his unbelief.

Was Zacharias alone when he saw the angel? Yes, all the people were outside praying, while the in-

cense was offered within; and now they began to wonder why the priest stayed so long. At last he came out; but he could not speak to them; he was dumb; and he made signs to them, that he had seen a vision in the temple. When he went home he could not speak to Elizabeth; but he told her, by signs and writing, all he had seen and heard; and the great honor God had promised them.

Many days passed, before Zacharias was able to speak again. This was a great trouble to him; but Zacharias was a good man; and, therefore, we may believe that he bore his punishment patiently and meekly, and asked pardon for his want of faith, and prayed that he

might never again disbelieve what God said.

God sends many messages to us, not by angels and visions, but by His word. All His promises and threatenings are messages to us. Some of them are very wonderful, too wonderful for us to understand, and we cannot tell how these things can be. But if we do not understand, we must believe and trust, or we shall displease God as Zacharias did. When we read the Bible, we should read it in humility and faith. All God has said, must come to pass; for "He is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall He not make it good?" *Num. xxiii. 19.*

CCXXXVII.

THE VIRGIN MARY.



SOON after the angel Gabriel had appeared to Zacharias in the temple, he was sent with a message of mercy to another of God's faithful servants. The holy angels in Heaven delight to carry messages of love to those on earth. Their greatest happiness is to obey the commands of God, and to do His will. We should pray to be enabled to do God's will here on earth, as it is done in Heaven; that, when we die, we may be taken to dwell with God, and His holy, happy angels, for ever.

Where was Gabriel sent now?

To Nazareth, to a virgin named Mary. It was joyful and wonderful news which the angel brought to Mary. As soon as he came to her, he said, "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." But why was Mary so blessed, and so highly favored? She did not know at first; and she felt troubled at what the angel said. But he soon comforted her, and told her in what a wonderful way she was going to be honored by God. Gabriel said, "Thou shalt have a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the son

of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Mary wondered very much when she heard this; she did not disbelieve what God had promised; but she asked the angel to tell her more; so he explained to her, that this child would be the son of God, God as well as man; and then Gabriel told her, that Elizabeth, who was Mary's cousin, would also soon have a son;—that messenger of the Lord who should prepare the way before Him. Mary was thankful to hear these promises; and she humbly said, "Be it unto me according to thy word;" so the angel departed from her.

Soon after this, Mary took a journey into Judea, to see her cousin Elizabeth. These two holy women were very glad to meet. They had much to say to one another; and all their time was spent in praising and thanking God for His great mercy and love to them. This is the right way of passing our time with our friends. We have all many things to be thankful for; and how

much better it is to talk of God's mercies, than of foolish, and idle, and worldly things! St. Paul says, that Christians ought to speak to one another "in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing with grace in the heart to the Lord." *Col. iii. 16.*

Mary stayed three months with her cousin Elizabeth, and then went back to her own home at Nazareth.

But who was this Mary, that she should be so highly honored of God? We are ignorant of the name and occupation of her parents. The evangelist does not tell us; and we cannot know. She was of the tribe of Judah, and a descendant of the royal family of David. She was a maiden of Nazareth, the beauty of whose character is very manifest from the brief notices of her life found in the Gospels. Her purity, piety, faith, and humility were known to God. He was pleased to select her from all the women of her nation, to be the highly-favored mother of the Messiah, the Son of God. Honored as she was, it did not make her proud, but humble.

CCLXXXVIII.

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.



AND now God remembered His promise and gave Elizabeth a little son. It was a joyful day in the house of Zacharias, when this child was born. The mother rejoiced, and all her cousins and neighbors with her; and the father rejoiced too; but he could not speak to tell them all how happy he was. When the babe was eight days old, he was circumcised. Then he was to be named. The angel himself had told Zacharias, that the child's name should be John. Elizabeth knew this, and wished to have it so; but all her friends and neighbors wanted the little boy to be called Zacharias, like his father, instead of John. They said to her, "None of thy kindred is called by that name." Then they made signs to Zacharias, and asked him what the child's name should be. Zacharias wrote down directly, "His name is John."

This showed his obedience, and his faith in God; and now the punishment of his unbelief was taken away, and his mouth was opened, and he praised God. He was filled with the Holy Ghost, and was enabled to prophesy; and he spoke of the great mercy which God was now going to show to His people, in giving them a Saviour.

Why was the son of Zacharias to be called John? Because that name means, the grace and mercy of God. This child was to be the messenger of mercy; he was to tell the people the way of salvation; to point out Christ to them as their Saviour.

How thankful Zacharias must have been for his speech again; and what a good use he made of it when he praised and glorified God! The power of speaking is a great blessing, for which we ought to be very thankful; and we should try to use it, and all our other blessings too, to the glory of God.

CCXXXIX.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.



MARY was married to a man named Joseph. He was a good man, and rejoiced in the blessing which God had promised to Mary. An angel had told him in a dream, that his wife should have a son, and that God himself was the Father of that son; and that his name should be called Jesus, or the Saviour, because he should "save his people from their sins."

The time for the birth of Jesus was then very near. Where was He to be born? The prophets had been taught to foretell His birth-place. Micah had said, that it should be in Bethlehem, in the tribe of Judah. But Joseph and Mary lived at Nazareth, many miles from Bethlehem; how then could this prophecy be fulfilled? What God says, He always does; and what is hard to us is very easy to Him.

The Jews were under the government of Augustus, emperor of Rome; and just at this time, he made a law that all his subjects should be taxed; that every person should pay a sum of money to the Roman government. All the people went to their own tribes, and their own cities, according to their families, to have their names taken down before the taxing began; so Joseph left Nazareth, and went to Bethlehem; for that was his city, because he was of the family of

David, who was a native of Bethlehem. And Mary went with Joseph. But Joseph and Mary had no possession, no house in Bethlehem; they were poor people; and when they went to the inn, they were told there was no room for them; so they went into a stable to rest there. That very night, God's promise to Mary was fulfilled; the child Jesus was born. His mother wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in the manger. He had no kind nurse to take care of Him; only his mother, and she was very poor, and could not do much for Him. How humble and lowly Jesus was!

His body was like that of any other little child; and He suffered pain and hunger like other children, and he needed food, and rest, and care, as they do. But there were some things in which Jesus was different from every other child that was ever born into this world. He had no sin.

When Jesus came the first time, He came in great humility, because He was going to suffer and die for sinners. But when He comes again, He will come in power and glory, to punish His enemies, and to take His people to reign with Him for ever. Let us pray that we may be among His people, and that, when He comes, we "may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless." 2 Peter iii. 14.

CCXL

THE SHEPHERDS.



HERE were some fields not very far from Bethlehem, and in these fields were shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks on that wonderful night when Jesus Christ was born. We may believe that these shepherds were good men; and that as they sat together in the long night, they often spoke to one another of holy and heavenly things. They knew that Jesus was coming into the world, and they were waiting and wishing to see Him. Perhaps they had heard of the angel's message to Mary, and knew that the time of His coming was now very near.

While the shepherds were thinking about these things, they saw a bright light shining around them. Was it the light of the moon? No; it was much brighter than the moon, or even than the sun; "an angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid." But the angel spoke gently to them, and said, "Fear not; for I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And while the shepherds were attending to this wonderful message, they saw, with

the angel, a great multitude of the heavenly host; and these angels all began to sing a song of praise to God; and the shepherds heard them. What was this song? "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men." Then the angels went away into Heaven, and the shepherds saw them no more.

Why did the angels sing this song? Why did they sing of peace on earth and good will to men? Because Jesus was come. He is our peace. He is called the "Prince of peace," because he came to bring peace upon the earth. If Jesus had not come, we could never have had peace with God; His anger would always have been on us. But when Jesus promised to bear the punishment of our sins, and to take them all away, then God could smile upon this earth again; then He could accept all who believed in Jesus, and be at peace with them for His dear Son's sake. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." *Rom. v. 1.* And God can now show His "good-will to man." He wishes all to be saved. It is not the will of our heavenly Father that one poor sinner should perish. He invites all to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. This was why the angels praised God, and sang of "peace on earth, good will to men."

Did the shepherds stay in the fields with their sheep, after the angels were gone away? No: they were so anxious to see Jesus, that they said directly, "Let us go now to Bethlehem; and see this thing which the Lord hath made known to us." So they made haste, and went to Bethlehem; and there they soon found Joseph and Mary, and the babe lying in the manger, as the angel had said. Then the shepherds went, and made known to their friends and neighbors what the angel had told them about

Jesus; and afterwards returned to their flocks full of holy joy.

We should be, like these shepherds, anxious to see and know Jesus. We cannot see Him with our bodily eyes, as they could; for He is not now a poor babe lying in a manger; He is in glory, in Heaven, at the right hand of God, far, far beyond our sight. But we can see and know Him by faith; we can come to Him in prayer; and He is still a Saviour, waiting to receive and bless all who truly believe in Him and love Him.

 CCXLI.

SIMEON AND ANNA.



WHEN Jesus was eight days old, He was circumcised and named; He was called Jesus, or the Saviour, because He was to save His people from their sins. Afterwards He was brought to Jerusalem, and presented in the temple to the Lord; and His mother offered a sacrifice in obedience to the law of Moses. Jesus was man, as well as God; He came to obey the law for us; and therefore He submitted to it all His life.

There was a very old man living at Jerusalem at this time, named Simeon. He was a very holy man. He had loved and served God many years; and he was now waiting to be called away to Heaven. Was Simeon willing to die? Yes; but there was one thing he wished be-

fore he died, and that was to see Jesus. He had long known Him in his heart by faith, but he wanted very much to see Him with his bodily eyes, and then to die. God knew Simeon's holy wish, and promised to grant it; He told him that he should not die till he had seen "the Lord's Christ." So Simeon came, led by the Spirit, into the temple, just when Jesus was there; and how pleased he was to see with his eyes that Saviour whom he had so long known in his heart; he took the babe up in his arms, and praised and blessed God, and said, "Now, Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." He had his wish; and now he wanted only to die, and go to Heaven.

There was another old person

who came into the temple while Simeon was there. This was Anna, a prophetess. She was a widow, eighty-four years old, and most of those years she had spent in the service of God. She lived near the temple; and was very often there, night and day, praying and praising God. God honored Anna, as He did Simeon, in letting her see the Saviour before she died; and when she saw Him, she gave thanks, and spoke of Him to all in Jerusalem, who were looking for salvation through Him.

The Bible tells us no more about these two old people. Perhaps they soon after went to their rest in Heaven; and they were ready and

glad when God called them there. When we come to die, there is only one thing that can give us true peace. It is that which made old Simeon and Anna so happy,—the knowledge of Christ, and of His salvation, in our hearts. Few people live to be so old as Simeon and Anna; and many die when they are very young. But, young or old, none can die happily who do not know Christ as their Saviour. We must seek to know Him now by faith; and then, whenever we are called away, we shall “depart in peace,” and go to see that Saviour in Heaven, whom Simeon and Anna rejoiced to see on earth.

 CCXLII.

THE WISE MEN.



WID any other persons see Jesus while He was a baby? Yes; we are now going to read of some good men who came a very long way, and took a great deal of trouble, that they might see Jesus. Simeon, and Anna, and the shepherds all lived near the place where Jesus was; but these men lived a very long way off, in the east, in Arabia, perhaps, or some other distant country. They are called “wise men.” They were very learned, and understood many things; and they had, too, what was better than all this. They had the best of all knowledge, which the

Bible calls wisdom. “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.” *Job* xxviii. 28.

These wise men knew something of Christ, and they wanted to know more. They had heard about Jesus; they were expecting His coming, and they wished to see Him. But how could they tell where to find Him? God knew all their thoughts and wishes; and He led them, in a wonderful way, to Jesus. They saw a star in the sky; not a common star, such as they saw every night; but one quite new to them, unlike any they had ever looked at before. Perhaps these wise men understood a great deal about the stars, and

knew many of their names, and could find out the constellations in the sky. Astronomy teaches these things, and the wise men, no doubt, understood astronomy. But they had no name for this new star; it belonged to no constellation; and as they looked at it, they wondered why it was there, and how it came. Astronomy could not tell them, but God could; and He made them understand, that He Himself had put it there, to tell them that Christ was come, and to lead them to the place where He was. When the wise men knew this, they were very glad, and determined to go directly to Jerusalem and worship Jesus. So they took some of the precious things of their country (gold, and frankincense, and myrrh), to present to Jesus, and set off on their long journey. The star went before them, moving through the sky; and the wise men kept their eyes upon it, and it led them the right way to Jerusalem. The men knew then, that Jesus was not far off; so they went to some of the people living in Jerusalem, and asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him."

Was Jesus a king? Yes; He was then, and He is now, "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" but His kingdom was "not of this world." He came to reign in the hearts of His people, and to make them obedient to His will.

Herod, king of Judea, soon heard of the wise men, and what they had said; and he was troubled, and many of his people were troubled also. Why were they not glad to hear of

Jesus? Did they not wish to see Him? No; Herod was afraid that this "King of the Jews" was come to take away his kingdom, and to reign in his place; for he did not understand that the kingdom of Jesus was "not of this world." So Herod called the priests, and the scribes, or writers of the law, and asked them where Christ must be born. How could they know? They had read the prophets; and there they had learnt that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. So they told this to Herod. Then Herod secretly called the wise men and asked them a great many questions about the star, and the time when they first saw it. They answered his questions; and then he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, "Go, and seek there for the young child; and when you have found him, come back, and tell me; for I wish to go and worship Him also." This was only a false pretence of Herod. He did not wish to worship Jesus. He wanted to know where He was, that he might send and kill Him.

The wise men went away from Herod; and the star still moved before them, and led them to Bethlehem, and, at last, "stood over where the young child was." Then the wise men rejoiced with very great joy; and went into the house, and "saw the young child, and Mary his mother; and fell down and worshipped him, and presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

We may learn many holy lessons from the story of the wise men. We should be as anxious as they were, to know and worship Jesus.

We need not take a long journey to come to Him; for He is near us wherever we are. He is God; and God, we know, is everywhere. And we do not want a star to lead us to Jesus. His word and His Spirit will lead us to Him, if we ask to be led. And how are we to come to Jesus? In faith and prayer. We cannot see Him with our eyes, but we can believe in Him and love Him

with our hearts; and He will hear our prayers, as He heard the prayers of the wise men; and bless us, as He blessed them. Must we bring gifts to present to Jesus? Not such gifts as the wise men brought; He does not ask for them. But He does ask us for something. He says, "Give me thy heart." He wants all our love—all our affections; all we are, and all we have.

 CCXLIII.

THE CHILDREN OF BETHLEHEM.



DID the wise men return to Herod, and tell him that they had found Jesus? No; God knew the wicked deceit of Herod's heart; and He warned the wise men, in a dream, not to return to the cruel king; so "they departed into their own country, another way." But when Herod heard that the men had gone away, without telling him what he desired, he became very angry. He was determined to kill Jesus; and as he did not know the house in which the Saviour lay, he said he would destroy all the little children in Bethlehem, hoping that Jesus would be killed among them. But God would not let Herod do what he so wickedly wished. Jesus indeed came into the world to die; but the time was not yet come. He must grow up to be a man, and obey all the law of God, and say, and do, and suffer

many things; and then He would die.

When the wise men were gone away, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, and take the young child, and his mother, and go into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." So Joseph arose directly, and took Mary, and the infant Jesus, and departed into Egypt. It was night when they escaped, and none saw them go.

And now Herod's cruel command was given. All the children in Bethlehem, from two years old and under, must be slain. Herod's hard-hearted messengers went from house to house, through the streets of Bethlehem, and tore one little child after another from the mother's arms, and murdered it. That was a sad, sad day in Bethlehem. The poor mothers wept bitterly, and begged the cruel soldiers to spare





BETHLEHEM.

their children; and the little children themselves cried, and clung to their mothers for safety; but nothing could save them: Herod and his men had no pity; all the babes in Bethlehem were slain.

Did Jesus feel for those little ones who died in Bethlehem for His sake? yes; these children were very dear to Him. He knew all their sufferings. But they were safe, as all little children are who die before they are able to understand these things. Jesus has made an atonement for them; He has washed

away their sin in His own blood, and they are accepted and saved for His sake. The children slain in Bethlehem are now in Heaven: rejoicing there with many more little ones, who, like them, died in infancy. They are not sorry that they died so soon. No; they rejoice that God was pleased to take them, before they knew much of the sorrow and sin of this sad and wicked world. They know now all that Jesus had done for them; and why they are so happy, and so safe with their Saviour in Heaven.

 CXXIV.

JESUS WITH THE DOCTORS.

JESUS and his parents stayed in Egypt until the death of the cruel king Herod; and then an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young child's life." So Joseph arose, and took Mary and the infant Jesus, and went back to the land of Israel. But they did not go to Bethlehem; for Herod's son Archelaus was now reigning in Judea, and Joseph was afraid of him; so, at the command of God, he went to Galilee, and settled in Nazareth, where he and Mary had lived before. Here Jesus was brought up. "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled

with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him."

You remember there was a feast which God commanded the Jews to keep, called the Passover. Every year, Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem to this feast; and when Jesus was twelve years old, they took Him with them. They went with a large company; and, after the feast was over, they returned together. Jesus stayed behind; but His parents thought He was in the company; so they began their journey towards home. A whole day passed, and they saw nothing of Jesus; and then they began to wonder where He was, and they sought Him among their friends and relations who were travelling with them. But no one had seen Jesus. Then His parents felt very unhappy, and

returned to Jerusalem, anxiously seeking Him all the way. When they came to the city, they went through the streets, and into many of the houses, but they could not find Him. At last, after three days, they went into the temple, and there, to their great joy, they saw Jesus sitting among the learned doctors; talking to them, and hearing, and asking them questions. And all who heard what Jesus said, wondered at his understanding and answers.

When Mary saw Jesus, she said to Him, "Son, why hast thou done this? Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." But Jesus answered, "Why did you seek me? Know you not that I must be about my Father's business?" Mary did not understand what Jesus said; but she remembered all His words, and heard them with reverence and kept them in her heart. Jesus had work to do, which Mary did not yet understand. He had His heavenly Father to honor—that Father was God. And what was the business which His heavenly Father had

given Him to do? It was to make himself known as the Saviour of sinners. This was why Jesus came down from Heaven. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." 1 *John* iv. 14.

But when Joseph and Mary called Jesus, He left the doctors directly, and went home with them to Nazareth, "and was subject unto them." And why did He submit to them? Because He came to obey all the commands of God; and one of those commands says, "Honor thy father and thy mother;" and because He wished to give an example to other children, and to teach them to be humble, and gentle, and meek, and obedient, as He Himself was. But can children be as good as the Lord Jesus Christ? No; because He was all holy, and they are weak and sinful; but they must pray and try to be like Him; and, if they ask for the Holy Spirit to enable them to become so, their prayers will be heard and answered; and then, as they grow in years, they will grow in grace too, and in the love and favor of God.

CCXLV.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.



WE read nothing more of the life of Jesus until He was thirty years old. All this time, perhaps, He was living at Nazareth with his parents, very quietly and humbly. Joseph was a carpenter; and Jesus himself might have worked for His daily bread. For "though He was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor;" and, though He was "equal with God," yet "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man." This should teach us humility. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." *Phil. ii. 5, 7.*

Where was John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, all this time? He was in the deserts of Judea; he was alone, spending all his time in prayer and praise. He forsook the world, that he might give himself up to the service of God. John had a great work to do; he was to make ready the way for Christ; and therefore he needed much time to prepare for this work, by praying to God, and thinking upon holy things. But a little time before Jesus began His ministry, John came "preaching in the wilderness of Judea." His raiment was of camel's hair; and he wore a leathern girdle, and his food was locusts and wild honey. How did he begin his preaching? He said, "Repent ye,

for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." John told the people, that Jesus himself was coming to show them the way to Heaven, and to set up his kingdom in the hearts of those who believed. But if people do not feel their sinfulness, they will not care for a Saviour; so when John was preparing the way for Christ, he said first, "Repent ye."

Were the people willing to attend to the preaching of John? Yes; they came to him in great numbers, from Jerusalem, and Judea, and round about Jordan. Some of them were really penitent; they felt that they were poor sinners unable to save themselves; and rejoiced to hear that a Saviour was coming, willing and able to save them. These people confessed their sins; and then John led them into the river Jordan, and baptized them; as a sign that they were truly penitent, and desired to give themselves up to the service of God. But the water of baptism had no power to cleanse their hearts; only the Holy Spirit could do that: and therefore John told those who came to him, that *he* could only baptize them with water; but that one was coming, much, much greater than himself, who would baptize them with the Holy Ghost. John spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ, who promises to give the Spirit to those who ask, to renew and sanctify their hearts.

Some of the people who came to

be baptized were not truly penitent. The Pharisees and Sadducees were among them. When John saw them, he warned them very solemnly of their sins: their pride, and deceitfulness, and unbelief. They were very proud of being Abraham's children; but John told them that this would not make them acceptable to God, if they had not Abraham's faith, and love, and obedience. He said, "Every tree which does not bring forth good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire. Now God is looking for fruit in you; He wishes to see you living in obedience to His holy commands. You cannot be truly penitent if you do not love Him, and try to please Him in all you do; and, without true repentance, you must at last perish for ever." Then some of the people said, "What must we do?" John told them to be kind one to another, honest in all they did, and contented with what they had, and then they would show, by their works, that their hearts were sincere, and that they were truly penitent.

We who have been baptized, profess to be the servants of God. If we really are so, we shall show our love to Him by obedience; by bringing forth good fruits. You know what these good fruits are; they are those holy tempers, of which the Bible tells us, "Love, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness." *Gal. v. 22.*

But these holy tempers do not spring up of themselves in our hearts. They are called "the fruits of the Spirit," because He only can implant them in us, and make them grow. The only fruits which come up of themselves in our hearts, are bad fruits; evil passions, and sinful tempers, and wicked thoughts. These are like the troublesome weeds which grow in our gardens; we must ask God to root them up, and take them all away, and we should pray Him to make us truly sorry for our sins, and to pardon them for the sake of Jesus Christ; and beg Him to give us the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts, and enable us to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance."

CCXLVI.

JESUS BAPTIZED.



WHEN all the people were baptized, John saw a person coming to Him different from any who had come before. All the others were sinners who needed pardon; but He who was now coming, needed no pardon, for "He knew no sin." It was the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who had left Nazareth, and come to Jordan, to be baptized there by John.

John was at first very unwilling to baptize Jesus. He felt his own unworthiness, and said, "I have need to be baptized of thee; and comest thou to me?" But Jesus answered, "Let it be so now, for thus we must fulfil all righteousness." Then he suffered Him. Jesus was baptized to show us that baptism is right; one of God's commands which He came to obey. He submitted to the law in all things, because, as man, He was to obey that law for us.

After Jesus had been baptized, as He came out of the water, the Heavens were opened, and a voice was heard speaking—the voice of God; and the Holy Spirit came down from Heaven, in the likeness of a dove, and rested on the head of Jesus. Who were witnesses of these wonderful transactions? God the Father was in Heaven, looking down in love upon Jesus, and saying, "This is my beloved

Son, in whom I am well pleased." God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was standing by the river Jordan; and God the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of peace and love, was resting upon His head in the likeness of a gentle dove.

We cannot explain how this was; but we must believe it, because God has written it for us in His word; and all that He says is true, and needful for us to know. We here may learn who were concerned in the work of our salvation. It was God the Father who "sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world," and who pardons and accepts all penitent sinners who come to Him through Jesus Christ. It was God the Son who came down from Heaven, and bore for us the punishment which we deserve to bear; and it is He who now "ever liveth to make intercession" for His people, before His Father's throne. And it is God the Holy Ghost who comes into the hearts of sinners, who renews, and sanctifies, and prepares them for Heaven.

What did the voice say which spoke from Heaven? It said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God said this, that John and all who heard it, might know that Jesus was the Son of God; and that the Father accepted Him as the Saviour of sinners. Do you know and love this wonderful and gracious God of whom we

have been reading? Pray that you may know and love Him more and more; that at last you may be taken to Heaven, where you will "see Him as He is," and dwell with Him for ever.

CCXLVII.

THE TEMPTATION.



AFTER His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. He was there forty days and forty nights, alone with the wild beasts. He spent the time in prayer and fasting, and communion with his heavenly Father.

When the forty days were ended, Jesus began to be weak and hungry; and at this time Satan came to Him, to tempt Him. But why did Jesus let Satan come to tempt Him? Because Jesus, as man, was to suffer all that we suffer; and to be tempted like as we are, yet without sin." *Heb. iv. 15.* You remember, when Adam and Eve had sinned, and God had passed sentence upon them for their sin, He said to Satan, the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." *Gen. iii. 15.* This seed of the woman was the Lord Jesus Christ. He came to conquer Satan, and to deliver sinners from his power. Satan was to "bruise the *heel*" of Christ—to trouble and distress him a little; but Christ was to "bruise the *head*" of Satan—to subdue him altogether, and take away his power. This prophecy

was now beginning to be fulfilled. How did Satan tempt the Saviour? First, he brought stones to Jesus, and said to Him, "Command that these stones be made bread;" for Satan knew that Jesus was weak, and hungry, and that He could make bread by a miracle if He pleased. But Jesus knew that it was not the right time for working such a miracle now; so He said to the tempter, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." God can preserve life by any means He pleases, and in all our wants we must trust to Him to provide for us in the way He appoints and sees best.

Then Satan tried a new temptation. He took Jesus up into a very high mountain, and there showed Him in a wonderful way, which we cannot understand, all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them; all the riches, and pleasures, and vanities of the world. Then Satan said, "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." But did these things belong to Satan? Was it in his power to give them away? No; "the earth is the Lord's, and all that is therein." The kingdoms of the world, and all their riches,

and all their glory, belong to God, and He can give them, and take them away, as He pleases. But Satan often uses these things as if they were his; and tempts people with them, as he now tempted Jesus? But what did Jesus say? He told Satan that it was written in God's word, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Then Satan led Jesus to the top of the temple, and placed Him on the highest part of the building, and said, "If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall command His angels to keep Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, that Thou hurt not thy foot against a stone." Satan now tried to deceive Jesus by speaking some of God's word. Satan had great knowledge, and great cunning too; and he makes a very wicked use of his powers: he tries to lead people by them into sin. God has promised to keep those who trust in Him, when they act in obedience to His commands; but He does not promise to keep those who boldly put themselves into danger without His command. It is very wrong, very wicked, to do this. Jesus would not cast Himself down from the temple, because it

was not God's will; so He said to Satan, "It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Then Satan left Jesus for a time; and holy angels came down from Heaven to comfort Him in His sorrows.

This same Satan who tempted Jesus, tempts us now every day we live. "The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 *Peter* v. 8. Wherever we go, whatever we do, Satan is near, trying to make us sin. We cannot see him with our eyes, nor hear his voice speaking to us, as Jesus could; but we can feel him in our hearts, filling them with evil passions, and sinful tempers, and wicked thoughts. And how can we conquer this great enemy Satan? Jesus Christ conquered him by His own power; but *we* cannot. Our hearts are so sinful, that, till they are renewed by the Holy Spirit, they love to attend to the temptations of Satan, and choose him for their master, and not God. How then can we resist him? Only in the strength of Christ. He will help us if we ask Him, and enable us to conquer Satan through His power. "For in that He himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." *Heb.* ii. 18.

CCXLVIII.

THE LAMB OF GOD.



WHEN the Jews heard that a man was preaching and baptizing near Jordan, they began to wonder who he was. They thought that, perhaps, he might be the Messiah of whom they had read in the prophets: so they sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask John, "Who art thou?" John did not wish to have more honor than belonged to him; he did not want to be thought better or greater than he really was; so he confessed directly, "I am not the Christ. I am only come to make ready the way for him. I baptize with water; but there is one among you who is much greater than I; He can baptize with the Holy Ghost; and, though he comes after me, yet He was before me; and I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose the latchet of His shoes." John spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came into the world, and began to preach after John the Baptist; but Jesus always *was*; for He is the eternal Son of God; without beginning, and without end.

The day after John had spoken to the priests and Levites, he saw Jesus coming, and pointed to Him, and said, "That is He of whom I was speaking yesterday, who is so much greater than I, and who was before me. It is He whom I baptized a little time ago; and I then saw the Heavens open, and the Spirit come

down like a dove, and rest upon Him. I know that He is the Son of God. Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

Why did John call Jesus the Lamb of God? You remember that the Jews, by the command of God, used to sacrifice a lamb every morning and every evening, and also at the feast of the Passover, and at many other times. The priests killed the lamb, and sprinkled the blood upon the people; and if the people came to the sacrifice in faith, they were pardoned by God, and their sins were taken away. But it was not the lamb's blood,—it was the blood of Christ that took their sins away. All the sacrifices were typical of Him; He was called "the Lamb of God," and "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," because God had chosen Him from eternity to be a sacrifice for sin. Therefore John said of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

And the lamb is a type of Jesus too, because it is so harmless, and meek, and gentle. So Christ was "without blemish and without spot;" perfectly holy; there was no sin in Him; and He was meek and gentle too; He was patient under all his sufferings. "He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,

so He opened not his mouth." *Isaiah* liii. 7.

This holy Lamb of God is not now upon our earth, as He was when John saw Him. He is on His glorious throne in Heaven, and many of His happy people are with Him there. But He is a Saviour still; and ready to take away the sins of all those who come to Him in faith and prayer. But He will not always be a Saviour. When the dreadful day of judgment comes, He will not hear the prayers of those who despise and forget Him now. He will then look upon them in anger, not in pity and love; and they will say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and

hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" *Rev.* vi. 16, 17.

If we wish to be safe and happy in that dreadful day, we must ask now to be "washed in the blood of the Lamb," and to have our names written "in the Lamb's book of life." And then, when we die, we shall be taken to join the happy company in Heaven, and sing with them, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." *Rev.* v. 13.

CCXLIX.

DISCIPLES BROUGHT TO JESUS.



THE next day, as John was standing with two of his disciples, he saw Jesus again, and said to them, "Behold the Lamb of God." The two disciples were very glad to hear that Jesus was so near, and they left John, and followed Him.

Was John sorry to lose them? No; he was glad that they were so anxious to be with Jesus; for he knew that Jesus could do much more for them than he could. John could only preach and talk to them; but Jesus could save their souls. He was John's Saviour, and he would be the disciples' Saviour too.

When Jesus turned round, and saw the two disciples following, He said to them, "What seek ye?" They answered, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" Then Jesus told them to come and see; so they came and saw where He dwelt, and stayed with Him that day; for it was now evening. What a happy evening it must have been for the disciples! They had many questions to ask; and Jesus was willing to answer them; but the disciples did not wish to keep their happiness to themselves. They wanted their friends to know and love Jesus too. One of these disciples was named Andrew. He had a brother called

Simon; and as soon as Andrew had seen Jesus, he ran to Simon, and said, "We have found the Messiah, the Christ!" and he brought his brother to Jesus. Jesus received Simon very kindly; and Simon loved his Saviour with all his heart. We shall often read about him again, for he was one of the twelve apostles. He was called Peter as well as Simon.

The next day, Jesus found a man named Philip, who lived in Bethsaida, the city in which Andrew and Simon Peter lived. Jesus said to Philip, "Follow me." Philip was willing to obey the command, but, like Andrew, Philip did not wish to go alone to Jesus; he wanted to bring others with him. He had a friend named Nathanael, who was a very good man. Nathanael loved to read the holy word of God, and there he had learnt much about the Messiah; and he was waiting and wishing for the coming of Jesus; but he had not yet seen Him. Philip knew how anxious Nathanael was to know Jesus, so he went directly, to tell him that Jesus was come.

Philip soon found his friend. He was sitting under a fig-tree, thinking of holy things, and praying to be taught more of that blessed Saviour whom he loved so much. When Philip saw Nathanael, he said, "We have found Him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote,—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael felt, at first, unwilling to believe that Jesus could be the Messiah. The Jews disliked the city of Nazareth very much, and thought that nothing good could come out of it. And Nathanael had read, too, in the prophets, that

the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, not in Nazareth. This was true; and Jesus had been born in Bethlehem; but Nathanael did not know it; so he said to Philip, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip answered, "Come and see;" and he brought Nathanael to Jesus.

When Jesus saw Philip and his friend coming, He pointed to Nathanael, and said to those who stood by, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." What did Jesus mean? He did not mean that Nathanael was without sin; for he was a sinful man, like Andrew, and Simon, and Philip, and needed a Saviour as much as they did. But Jesus meant, that Nathanael was sincere; that he really loved God; really wanted to know and believe in Christ. He was "an Israelite indeed;" one of the true people of God; not like the Pharisees who boasted that they were Israelites, but did not truly love the God of Israel. The Pharisees were hypocrites,—only pretending to be God's people; but Nathanael was sincerely seeking to serve God in the right way.

Nathanael wondered very much to hear Jesus speak in this way; and he said, "Whence knowest thou me?" Jesus answered, "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Jesus knew all the thoughts of Nathanael—all his wants, and all his desires; He had heard his prayers from the first moment Nathanael began to pray; Jesus knew all this, because He was God.

When Nathanael heard what Jesus said, he felt that this wonder-

ful person must be the Christ, the true Messiah; and he said to Jesus, "Master, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." Jesus answered, "Because I said, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. Hereafter ye shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Jesus spoke of that wonderful day when He will come again in His glory, and every eye will see Him; but only those who love Him as their Saviour *now*, will rejoice to look upon Him *then*.

If we know Jesus ourselves, we should try, like Andrew and Philip, to lead others to Him also. Perhaps we may have brothers, or sisters, or friends, who do not yet love Jesus. Then we ought to ask them to come and seek Him. How pleasant it will be, as we journey to Heaven, to see our dear friends going there with us. We should say to all we love, what, you remember, Moses said to his father-in-law Hobab, in the wilderness: "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you; come with us, and we will do thee good." *Num. x. 29.*

OCL

WATER MADE WINE.



LITTLE time after this, Jesus went to Galilee. There was a marriage in Cana; and Jesus, and His mother, and His disciples, were invited to the marriage feast. A great many people were at this feast; the wine was soon all drunk, and they wanted more; so the mother of Jesus turned to Him, and said, "They have no wine." Then Jesus told Mary not to trouble herself about this, but to wait patiently, and leave all to Him. For though Jesus submitted to His mother, because, as man, He was her son; yet, sometimes, He reproved and instructed her too, because, as God, He was her Lord and Master. Mary knew this; and she

always humbly attended to what Jesus said.

The servants were in the room, waiting upon the company, and Mary spoke to them, and said, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." There were set there six pots of stone, to hold water for cleansing and washing; for the Jews were very particular about these things. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the water-pots with water;" so they filled them up to the brim. Then Jesus told the servants to pour out, and carry it to the governor of the feast. The servants did as Jesus commanded. They poured out what was in the water-pots, and took it to the governor, and he drank it. But it

was not water now. The wonderful power of Jesus had, in one moment, turned the water into wine. The governor did not know what had been done; but he was very much pleased with the wine, because it was so good; and he called the bridegroom, and said, "Thou hast kept the best wine until now." The mother of Jesus, and His disciples, and the servants, all knew who it was that had made this good wine; and wondered at the great power of Jesus, and "His disciples believed on Him."

This was the first miracle which Jesus did. We have often read of

miracles in the Old Testament History. Moses turned water into blood, at the the command of God; afterwards he sweetened the bitter waters of Marah; and then again, he struck the rock at Meribah, and water rushed out. Elijah and Elisha too, and many others, worked miracles. But the way in which they worked them, was not like the way in which Christ worked them. The prophets wrought wonders by the command of God; Christ wrought them by His own power. He had power to do any wonder He pleased, because He was God.

COLL

THE TEMPLE CLEANSED.



SOON after the feast in Cana of Galilee, Jesus went to Jerusalem, to the passover which was kept there at this time, and he entered into the temple.

We have often read of the temple at Jerusalem. You remember the glorious one which Solomon built, and which Nebuchadnezzar's army threw down and destroyed. After the Babylonish captivity, the Jews built a new temple, but not so large and beautiful as the first. This second temple was rebuilt and beautified by king Herod, and the Jews were proud of it, and admired it very much. But they did not honor it in the way God's house ought to be honored. When Jesus

came into the temple, He found people there selling oxen, and sheep, and doves. These animals were used for the sacrifices; but they should not have been sold within the holy walls of God's house. Jesus was very angry with the people who were buying and selling in the temple. He drove them all out, and the sheep, and the oxen; and threw down the tables, and poured out the money, and said to those that sold doves, "Take these things away; make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." The temple belonged to God; and therefore Jesus would not let it be dishonored.

We, like the Jews, have temples for the worship of God;—how do

we use them? We never see people buying and selling in our churches; but there is a way of dishonoring God's house without doing this. How? By bringing worldly thoughts into His holy temple. Some people, perhaps, think about their money; some about their shops; some about their every-day work and business; some about their pleasures, or their dress, while they are in God's house. They think of these worldly things, instead of thinking of God, and Christ, and Heaven; instead of confessing

their sins with all their hearts, and asking for pardon and grace. This makes God very angry. He gives no blessing to these careless, worldly-minded people. They go away from the house of God with His frown upon them, and not His smile. If we wish for a blessing when we go into the temple of God, we must pray that all our vain, foolish, worldly thoughts may be taken away before we go there; and ask God Himself to take possession of our hearts.

CCLL

N I C O D E M U S .



HERE was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The Pharisees were not, in general, followers of Jesus. They were proud and self-righteous, and thought themselves too good to need a Saviour; so they hated and despised Him. But Nicodemus was not like these proud men. He was humble and willing to come to Jesus.

Nicodemus had heard a great deal of the miracles and wonders which Jesus did, and thought He must be a very holy man; a prophet, perhaps, sent by God; but Nicodemus did not, at first, feel quite sure that Jesus was the Son of God. So, like Andrew, and Simon, and Philip, he determined to "come and see." But Nicodemus did not, like those good men, follow

Jesus boldly. He was afraid or ashamed to do this. Perhaps he thought his friends might persecute or despise him if they saw him going to Jesus of Nazareth. So Nicodemus went to Christ secretly, by night, when none could see him. The faith of Nicodemus was very weak and small; yet Jesus did not send him away; He casts out none who come to Him.

What did Nicodemus say when he came to Jesus? He said, "Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do those miracles that Thou doest except God be with him." Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And afterwards He said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom

of God." Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus meant. He did not know what it is to be "born again." Do *you* know? It is very needful for us all to understand what it is to be "born again."

When the Holy Spirit comes into the heart, then the heart is made new and clean, just as anything is made clean that is washed with water. Before, it loved sin and Satan; but now, it will love God and holiness. St. Paul spoke of this change of heart, when he said, "Old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 *Cor.* v. 17. This is being "born again."

We cannot understand how all this can be. We cannot see the Holy Spirit of God working in the heart, and making it new and clean; but we can see the good fruits,—the holy tempers which He causes to spring up. When Jesus was explaining these things to Nicodemus, He said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth; and thou hearest the sound, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We can hear the wind blow; we can see the trees shaken by it: but we cannot see the wind itself; it is invisible. So, when the Holy Spirit comes into the heart, we see that a person is changed,—different from what he was before; and we know that God's Holy Spirit must have made the change; but this is all we know. We cannot see the Spirit; He is invisible like the wind.

Do you understand now what it is to be born again? It is to have a new heart; to be made a child of God. Has your heart been changed?

You "cannot enter into the kingdom of God," till it is. Ask God then to take away your "stony heart," and to give you "a heart of flesh." Say, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." *Psalms* li. 10.

Nicodemus wondered very much at what Jesus said, and asked "How can these things be?" Nicodemus was a learned man; "a ruler of the Jews," "a master in Israel," and yet he could not understand the things of God, till Jesus explained them to him. And so it is with us all. People can never rightly understand heavenly things without God's teaching. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 *Cor.* ii. 14.

Nicodemus felt his ignorance and was anxious to be taught; and Jesus was ready and willing to teach him. He told him not only of the Spirit's power in renewing the heart, but of the Father's love in finding out a way of salvation for sinners, and of Himself as that way. He said, "God so loved the world, that He sent His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He told Nicodemus about the serpent of brass raised by Moses in the wilderness, upon which the bitten Israelites looked and were healed. The brazen serpent was a type of the Lord Jesus. Nicodemus had often read the story; but, perhaps, he had never understood it rightly, till Jesus said to him, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." Jesus must be lifted up upon the cross and die, that perishing sinners, who look to Him in faith, may be eternally saved.

What wonderful things Nicodemus heard from Jesus that night! he was very glad to hear them; and he went away believing that Jesus

was not only a prophet, but that He was "the only-begotten Son of God," the Messiah, the Saviour of sinners. When we read of Nicodemus again, we shall find that his faith became stronger, and that he learnt not to be ashamed nor afraid of confessing himself a disciple of Jesus.

CCLIII.

JOHN THE BAPTIST IMPRISONED.



ABOUT this time, John the Baptist was thrown into prison by Herod the tetrarch of Galilee. This Herod was a son of the cruel king of Judea who had murdered the little children of Bethlehem. He was cruel and wicked like his father. When John first began to preach, Herod the tetrarch liked him, and did many things which John said was right, "and heard him gladly." But when John faithfully and boldly reprov'd him for his sins, Herod grew angry; for he loved sin, and did not like to give it up. So he took John and cast him into prison, that he might hear his warnings and reproofs no more.

Do you think it was very wicked of Herod to do this? It was; but

when we read of his wickedness, we should remember, that we all have, by nature, the same proud and rebellious spirit which made him so cruel to the faithful John. Many people are impatient and angry when a faithful minister or a kind friend warns them of their sins, and of the dreadful end of sin if unrepented of. Even children are often very angry, when reprov'd of their faults by their kind parents or teachers. Instead of attending humbly to what is said, they are sullen and angry because they are told of their faults, not sorry because they have done wrong. All this is very wicked, and very foolish too; for those who kindly reprove us, are our best friends; and Solomon says, "He that heareth reproof getteth understanding." *Prov. xv. 32.*

CCLIV.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.



AFTER John was put into prison, Jesus left Judea to go into Galilee, and passed through Samaria, for Samaria was between Judea and Galilee. He came to Sychar, and sat down to rest upon a well, called Jacob's well, because many years before, it had belonged to Jacob. Jesus was weary with His journey, hungry, and thirsty; His disciples were gone into the city to buy food, and He was alone.

A woman of Samaria came to the well to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me to drink." The woman wondered very much when Jesus asked her for water; and said, "Why dost thou, being a Jew, ask drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" Why was she so much surprised? Because the Jews and the Samaritans were not friendly with one another. They had long been enemies. We read in the Old Testament History, that when the ten tribes of Israel were taken away captive, the king of Assyria sent some of his own people to dwell in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel. The Samaritans were descendants of these people. At first they were idolaters; afterwards they gave up their idols, but they never received the whole word of God; they read only a part of it; and when Ezra and Nehemiah, and the Jews, returned from Babylon, and began to build the temple and city of Jeru-

salem, the Samaritans, you remember, tried to hinder them; and they would not worship at the temple in Jerusalem, but built one for themselves on Mount Gerizim. All these things made the Jews hate the Samaritans very much; and the proud self-righteous Pharisees would not even drink water drawn by a Samaritan. This was very wrong; very unlike the kindness and love of Jesus. He came to save all, and was willing to bless and receive any poor sinner who really believed in Him.

Jesus answered, and said to the woman, "If thou knewest who it is that saith, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of me, and I would have given thee living water. Those who drink of this water will soon thirst again; but those who drink of the water which I give will never thirst any more."

The woman could not understand what Jesus meant; but she thought it must be very pleasant never to thirst again, so she said to Jesus, "Sir, give me this water." The woman did not know of what water Jesus was speaking; she could not tell what He meant by "living water." Jesus was not speaking of the water we drink to refresh our bodies; but of spiritual water—water for the soul. What is this? It is the Holy Spirit which refreshes and gives life to the soul. as the water we drink does to the



NAZARETH.

body. Without water, our bodies must die; and without the grace of God's Holy Spirit, our souls must perish for ever.

Was Jesus willing to give living water to the woman of Samaria? Yes; but He first told her more about it, and about Himself, for she did not yet know Him to be the Saviour. The woman wondered more and more at all Jesus said to her, and she began to think He must be a prophet; so she asked Him some questions about the place in which God ought to be worshipped. She wished to know whether it should be Jerusalem, as the Jews said, or Mount Gerizim, as the Samaritans said. Jesus told her that God did not so much care about the *place*, as about the *spirit* in which the people worshipped Him. He said "God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth; and He will accept such, in whatever place they may pray." Then the woman answered, "I know that Messiah cometh, and He will tell us all things." Jesus said, "I that speak unto thee am He." How glad the woman was to hear this! So glad that she could not stand by the well any longer, but ran directly into the city, to tell the good news

to all her friends, and to bring them to Jesus.

She said, "Come, see a man who told me all that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" Then the people ran out of the city, and came to Jesus.

The disciples returned, bringing food for their master to eat; but Jesus said, "I have meat to eat which you know not of. My meat is to do the will of my Father who is in Heaven." Jesus was so happy, giving the water of life to the poor Samaritans, that He thought nothing of His own bodily wants. That was a blessed day at Samaria. Many of the people believed; and they were so very glad to hear Jesus preach, that they asked Him to stay a little longer, and teach them more about the way to Heaven. So He abode there two days.

This same Jesus, who once thirsted at the well of Samaria, is now sitting as a king upon His Father's throne in Heaven. But He is still willing to hear the prayers of all who call upon Him in spirit and in truth; still willing to give the living water to all who ask for it. He says, "Whosoever will, let Him take of the water of life freely."

Rev. xxii. 17.

CCLV.

THE NOBLEMAN'S SON.



AFTER two days, Jesus left Samaria, and went to Cana, in Galilee, where He had made the water wine. A person came to see Him here from Capernaum. This person was a rich man, a nobleman. He was in very great trouble. His child was ill; a dear little boy, whom he loved very much. Perhaps the nobleman had called many physicians to see his son, before he went to Jesus. But no physician, no medicine, had done the child any good. He grew worse and worse; and as the father stood by the sick bed, he thought very soon his poor little boy must die, and be carried to the tomb; and then his parents and friends would see him no more. This sad thought made the father weep as he looked on his sick child.

At last the nobleman heard of the wonderful things which Jesus had done, and he determined to ask Him to come and heal his son. So the father left his house and his poor sick child, and went to Cana, to see Jesus. Did Jesus go to Capernaum when the nobleman asked him? No; Jesus wanted to try the faith of the father, and to teach him to believe in Him more; so He said to him, "If you do not see signs and wonders, you will not believe." The nobleman was impatient for Jesus to go to his son

directly, and he could not bear to wait; and he said again very anxiously, "Sir, come down before my child die!" for he did not think that Jesus had power to heal his son at a distance. But Jesus said again, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." And the man was enabled to believe the word that Jesus had spoken, and went his way.

The next day, before the father was come to Capernaum, he saw some of his servants running to meet him. Why did they come? Was the child worse? Had he died while his father was away? No; the little boy was well, and the servants were come to tell the father the good news. Then the nobleman asked when the child began to be better. The servants said, "Yesterday, at the seventh hour, the fever left him." So the father knew that it was the very time at which Jesus had said unto him, "Thy son liveth." As soon as Jesus had spoken that word, the child was well.

The nobleman believed now that Jesus had power to do all things; and that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners. And not only the father believed, but all the family too; the servants, and the children:—the little boy who had been so ill, learnt to believe in Jesus, who had pitied him, and made him well.

How happy they all were now! They were happy, not because they were rich and great, but because they believed in Jesus, and had Him for their Saviour and their friend. Do you wish to be as happy as they? Then you too must believe in Jesus. Perhaps, like the nobleman's son, you have kind friends who have asked Jesus to

heal you of a worse disease than that poor child had—the disease of sin. But you must pray for yourself, if you want to be healed. Ask the Saviour to take away your sins, and enable you to love Him; and He will hear your prayer, and make you a truly happy, because a holy, child.

CCLVI.

JESUS AT NAZARETH.



ABOUT this time Jesus went to Nazareth, the place where He had lived when a child; for He wished to preach the Gospel to the people there. On the Sabbath day, He went into the synagogue, or place of worship, and stood up to read. The Jews had certain parts of God's word appointed to be read every day; and the part for this day was from the prophet Isaiah. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath sent me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to comfort those that mourn." God's Spirit had taught Isaiah to write these words many years before. They were a prophecy of Jesus; and they were now fulfilled, for He was come, and was preaching the Gospel, and healing the sick, and comforting those that believed in Him. So when Jesus had finished reading, He shut the book, and gave it to the minister, and sat

down. All the people looked at Him in wonder; and then He said to them, "To-day this scripture is fulfilled in your ears."

But some of the people despised Jesus, and would not believe that He was the Son of God. And when He reproved them for their unbelief, they grew angry, and rose up, and drove Him out of the city, to the top of a hill, wishing to throw Him down. But Jesus did not let them do this, for the time for His death was not yet come. He did not fight against his enemies, but He quietly passed through the midst of them, and all felt His power, and none dared to touch Him. So he left Nazareth, and came to Capernaum, and taught there.

Jesus offers His gospel to sinners now. He invites them to believe in Him, and be saved. But very many, like the people of Nazareth, will not attend to Him, nor receive Him into their hearts as their Saviour. Jesus will not bear with such obsti-

nate sinners for ever. Perhaps He may leave them to themselves, as He left the people of Nazareth; and what will become of them then?

What will become of them when they die, and when Jesus Himself calls them to judgment?

CCLVII.

THE FISHERMEN OF GALILEE.



ONE day, Jesus was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and all the people came round Him to hear the word of God. Two little ships were standing at the water's edge, but no one was in them; for the fishermen were gone out, and were washing their nets. One of these ships belonged to Simon Peter, the good man of whom we read before, who was brought by his brother Andrew to see Jesus. So Jesus went into this ship, and asked Simon to push it away a little from the land. And then Jesus sat down and taught the people out of the ship.

What a beautiful sight it must have been! The Saviour sitting in the little ship on the pretty quiet lake, preaching the Gospel; and all the people standing on the shore, anxiously attending to every word He spoke. We may hope that many learnt that day to believe in Jesus, and that they are now happy with Him in Heaven.

When Jesus had finished speaking, He told Simon to let down his net, and try to catch some fish. Simon said, "Master, we have toiled all night, and taken nothing; but

at Thy command, I will let down the net again." Simon believed in Jesus, and loved to obey Him in everything; so he threw the net into the sea directly. And did he catch any fish? Yes; so many that the net was broken with the great weight; and Simon was obliged to call his friends in the other ship to come and help him. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. It was the power of Jesus which brought this great number of fish into Simon's net; for Jesus, as God, has power over everything on land and in the sea. All creatures obey His will. And how kind Jesus was to His disciples, to help them in their difficulties and troubles! for they were poor men, and gained their living by fishing.

When Simon Peter saw the miracle which Jesus had done, he fell down before Him, and cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Peter felt how powerful and holy Jesus was, and how unworthy he himself was to be with Jesus. It was humility which made Peter say, "Depart from me," not dislike to Jesus; for Peter loved his Master more than he loved any-

thing in the world. Jesus knew what was in Peter's heart; and He spoke very gently to him, and said, "Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men." What did Jesus mean by this? Peter had been a fisherman all his life; but now he was to be so no more. He was to be a preacher of the Gospel; and to labor for the souls of men; and try to bring them to Jesus, that they might believe and be saved. This is what is meant by "catching men." Christ's faithful ministers now try to "catch men," when they preach the Gospel and invite sinners to come to Jesus. It was an honor for Peter to have this work given him; for it is the best and holiest work that any man can have to do.

The two disciples, Simon and Andrew, brought their ships to land; and then they left all,—ships, and fish, and everything they possessed, and followed Jesus. They loved Him better than any worldly possession; and they knew they could want nothing when they had Him for their Master and their friend. So Jesus and the two disciples walked along by the sea-side, and soon they saw two other fishermen, James and John, sitting in a

ship with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. James and John loved the Lord Jesus; and Jesus knew what was in their hearts; and, as He passed, He called them to come after him. James and John obeyed the call directly. They left their ships, and their nets, and their father Zebedee too, and followed Jesus. Did James and John want to be idle? or were they unkind to their father in going away from him? No; Jesus would not have loved them if they had been idle or unkind; for He teaches His followers not to be slothful in business; and He commands children to honor, and love, and obey their parents in all things. Perhaps Zebedee himself was a good man; and then he must have rejoiced when Jesus called his sons, and gladly let them go.

We may learn a lesson of obedience from these disciples. When Jesus speaks to us in His word, we ought to obey His commands directly. He tells us all to follow Him; to believe in Him; to love Him, and serve Him with all our hearts. We should pray that we may be the disciples of Jesus, and follow Him in the way that leads to Heaven.

CCLVIII.

A DEVIL CAST OUT.

JESUS went to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath day He taught in the synagogue. But a poor man was there who could not understand nor enjoy the blessed words which Jesus spoke. This man was possessed with a devil.

At that time, Satan had great power over the bodies of men. Evil spirits, sent by him, often entered into them, and made them wild and furious, in a way which we never see now. No physician could drive away these evil spirits, and heal the poor people possessed by them; but Jesus had power to subdue even Satan. He had before conquered him in the wilderness; and He often conquered him afterwards, by casting out devils from the bodies of poor afflicted people. God let Satan have great power at this time, that Christ might show His much greater power in subduing Satan.

The devil who possessed the poor man in the synagogue, knew Jesus, and spoke to Him. He said, "Let us alone, thou Jesus of Nazareth; art thou come to destroy us? I know who Thou art;—the Holy

One of God." Satan, and all the evil spirits of hell, know and fear Jesus. They know that He is the Son of God, and that He came to save those who are lost; and therefore they hate Him; for Satan wishes to destroy the souls of men, and would like all to be with him where he is. And the devils are afraid of Jesus too; because they know how much stronger He is than they; and that at last they will be subdued by Him, and shut up in hell for ever.

Jesus, in love and mercy to the poor man, spoke to the evil spirit, and said, "Hold thy peace and come out." And the devil could not resist the command; he threw the man down, and came out, and did not hurt him. And all the people saw and wondered, and acknowledged the great power of Jesus.

Satan is not now allowed to possess the *bodies* of men; but he still possesses power to tempt them. He is the adversary, who, "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Pray that this same Jesus, who cast the devil out of the poor man, may deliver your soul from Satan's wiles.

CCLIX.

THE LEPER.



WHEN Jesus came out of the synagogue, He went with James and John into the house where Andrew and Simon lived. There was trouble in this house. Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever. The disciples were very sorry to see her so ill, and they asked Jesus to come and heal her. So He took her by the hand, and the fever left her; and she arose, and ministered to them.

Jesus went through Galilee preaching, and casting out devils, and healing the sick. Many poor people came to Him and told Him their sorrows; and He attended to them, and pitied them all. Amongst others, a leper came, and fell down and worshipped Jesus, and said, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." This poor leper knew that Jesus was *able* to cure him; for he believed Him to be the Son of God. But the leper did not feel quite sure that Jesus was *willing* to cure him. This was why he said,

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

And did Jesus cure him? Yes; as soon as the poor leper prayed, Jesus put out His hand and touched him, and said, "I will; be thou clean;" and the leper was cleansed directly. Then Jesus told him to go and show himself to the priests, and offer for his cleansing as Moses commanded. The leper was to show himself to the priests, that they might see, and be quite sure that he was really cleansed; and he was to present the offering in gratitude to God for his cure.

Leprosy is a type of sin. Sin makes us unclean in the sight of God; and till it is cleansed and taken away, He cannot receive us into Heaven. And who can cleanse the leprosy of sin? Only He who cleansed the poor leper of whom we have been reading,—the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is able and willing to cleanse all who come to Him, in faith and humility, as the leper came.

CCLX.

THE SICK OF THE PALSY.

JESUS now went again to Capernaum. The people there soon heard that He was come, and hastened to the house where He was, in great numbers. And He preached to them there.

While Jesus was preaching, some people came to the house, carrying with them a poor man who was sick of the palsy. He was so weak and ill that he could not walk; so his kind friends brought him on a bed. They wished to ask Jesus to cure him. But they could not come in at the door; for the multitude was so great, that there was no room for the poor sick man to be carried in. What could his friends do? Did they take him back again? No; they went up to the top of the house, and took off the roof; and then let him down, upon his bed, into the midst, before Jesus. They could easily do this; for the roofs of the houses in the East are flat, and made of much lighter materials than the roofs of our houses.

But was not Jesus angry when He saw the sick man let down, and brought before Him in this way? No; Jesus was not angry, but pleased with what these people did, because He saw that they believed in Him, and trusted to His willingness and power to heal their friend. So He turned to the sick man, and said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven

thee." This was joyful news to the poor man; the pardon of his sins was better, far better, than the cure of his body. Jesus was going to heal his body too; but He gave him forgiveness of sins first; because *that* is the best gift that Jesus can bestow.

But some of the proud Pharisees who were there began to be angry with what Jesus had said. They did not believe Him to be God, and therefore they thought that He had no right nor power to forgive sins. Jesus knew their thoughts; and to show them that He had power to do as He pleased, He said again to the sick of the palsy, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." And the sick man was cured directly, and became well and strong; so he took up his bed, and departed, glorifying God. All the people wondered, and praised God; and we may hope that many of them learnt really to believe in Jesus.

This wonderful story of the power and mercy of Jesus, may teach us to believe and come to Him too. Our souls are as weak and helpless as this poor man's body was; and we are as unable to cure ourselves, as he was when Jesus said, "Arise and walk." But Jesus is willing to save all who will come to Him at any time, and in any place. He says, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." *John vi. 37.*

CCLXI.

MATTHEW CALLED.



AS Jesus was one day passing by the receipt of custom, the place where the taxes were collected, He saw a man named Levi, or Matthew, sitting there, and He called to him, and said, "Follow me." But could Matthew leave his business and follow Jesus? Yes, he was willing to leave it; for Matthew knew that it was his first duty, and his greatest happiness too, to obey his Saviour's command; so "he left all, rose up, and followed Him."

Matthew was very glad to become a follower of Jesus; to be always near Him, and to hear His words. He made a great feast in his house that day, and Jesus was there; it was a happy, joyful time for Mat-

thew. But Matthew gained no worldly riches by following Jesus; for Jesus was poor Himself, and all His disciples were poor too. Matthew had much trouble and persecution to suffer while he lived; and at last he died for his Master's sake. But did he ever feel sorry that he had "left all" to follow Jesus? No; Matthew will for ever rejoice that he did so; for Jesus has given him what is much better than anything in this world; He has given him eternal life in Heaven, and treasures there which he will never, never lose.

Let us be obedient, like Matthew, to the call of Jesus, and follow him as Matthew did; and be ready to give up all we have, and all we are, for His sake and to His service.

CCLXII.

THE POOL OF BETHESDA.



ABOUT this time, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went to Jerusalem to keep it.

There was at Jerusalem, by the sheep-market, a pool called the pool of Bethesda. Round this pool were five porches, and in them lay a great number of poor sick people. Some were blind, some lame, some withered; all were suffering from some sad disease. Why did these poor people come to the pool of Bethesda? Because they wanted to be cured, and they might be cured there in a very wonderful way. God was pleased, at certain times, to send an angel into the pool to trouble the water: and the first sick person who stepped in after the water was troubled, was cured of any disease he had. How wonderful this was! We cannot tell *how* the troubled waters could cure the sick people:—their cure was a miracle; for God, who once cleansed the leper Naaman, by the waters of Jordan, could still cure in any way, and by any means he pleased.

When Jesus passed by the pool, He saw a poor man lying there, who had been ill a very long time. Thirty-eight years he had been in pain and suffering, and he could find no cure for his disease. Could not the troubled waters cure him? Yes, they might; but he was too ill and weak to step into the pool.

He used to see others brought there, and put into the water; and he saw them come out well and strong, and he wished he could be so too. But he had no kind friend to put him in. Sometimes he tried to come alone; but while he was coming another stepped down before him. Then he was too late; and he was obliged to wait till the angel came again; and so it was many, many times. Jesus knew all this. He knew how much, and how long, the poor man had suffered; and now He was going to cure him Himself, not by the waters of Bethesda, but by His own almighty power. So Jesus looked kindly upon the sick man, and asked, "Wilt thou be made well?" The man wanted to be made well, but he had waited so many years in vain, that he was now almost in despair. So he told Jesus all his sorrow, and then the kind Saviour said, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." And the man was made whole directly, and took up his bed and walked.

It was the Sabbath-day when Jesus did this miracle; and the Jews, when they saw the man carrying his bed, told him that it was wrong to do so on the Sabbath; and they asked who had made him well. He did not know, for he had never before seen Jesus; but soon after, Jesus found him in the temple, and spoke to him, and said, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon

thee." The man was now healed of his bodily disease; but Jesus reminded him of that worst disease, sin. If his sin was not taken away, he must at last suffer much more in another world, than he had suffered while lying at the pool of Bethesda.

The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had cured him. Then those unbelieving Jews persecuted Jesus, and tried to kill Him, because they thought He had broken the Sabbath day. How foolish and wicked these people were.

We read no more about the man who was made well. We may hope that he attended to the words of

Jesus, and that he found a cure for his sinful soul, as well as for his sick body.

There is no pool of Bethesda now. We hear sometimes of healing springs, and many sick persons go to them, as anxious to be cured as the poor man who lay so long at the pool of Bethesda. But the pool of Bethesda may remind us of something else—of that fountain of which the Bible tells us, "the fountain opened for sin," which can heal our perishing souls. Sinners may come to that fountain every day, and be cured; none need perish, and none need wait. "Whosoever will, let him come."

CCLXIII.

THE WITHERED HAND.



IT was the Sabbath day, and Jesus, with His disciples, was walking through the fields of corn. He was going on some holy work; for all He did was holy, and wherever He was, He "went about doing good." How pleasant it was for the disciples to be with Jesus, and to ask Him questions, and to hear His blessed words as they walked along! They did not talk of the things of this world; their conversation was about holy and heavenly things,—the only conversation fit for the Sabbath day.

The disciples were hungry. They were poor men; perhaps they had

little or no food that day; or, perhaps, no time to eat it; and now they felt faint as they walked along, so they gathered some of the ears of corn, and began to eat. There was nothing wrong in this; but there were some people there who said that it was wrong. These people were the Pharisees who were always trying to trouble Jesus, and to accuse him of breaking the law. So they spoke to the disciples, and said, "Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath day?" Jesus heard what the Pharisees said, and He answered, "Have you not read in the Bible what David did when he was hungry, and the

men who were with him? He went into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which the law commands the priests alone to eat. But David and his men were allowed to eat it then, because they were hungry, and because there was no common bread for them. So now, I allow my poor hungry disciples to pluck the corn, though it is the Sabbath day; and I have power to allow them, for the Sabbath is mine, and I am the Lord of it."

Some time after, Jesus went on the Sabbath day into the synagogue. There was in the synagogue, this Sabbath, a man whose right hand was withered. It was so weak that he could not move it.

The Pharisees in the synagogue watched Jesus, to see what He would do. They knew how kindly He always healed the poor sick people; and they thought that if He now cured this man's hand, they could accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath. Jesus knew their thoughts. How could He know them? Jesus was God:—the same God who had at first made the mind of man, and given him power to think. All the thoughts of all His creatures are known to Him.

So Jesus called the man with the withered hand, and told him to stand up. Then Jesus turned to the people, and said, "Is it lawful to do good, or to do evil, on the Sabbath day? To save life, or to destroy?" But they made no answer.

Then He said again, "If you had a sheep, and it were to fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, would you not go directly, and lift it out? And do you not feed your cattle, and take care of them on the Sabbath day? This poor man is worth more, far more, than those animals; and shall not I cure him? It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day." Then Jesus said to the man, "Stretch forth thy hand." But how could he? His hand was withered and dead. When Jesus gave a command, He gave also, at the same time, the power to obey that command. The man believed in Jesus, and tried to do directly what he was told; and he was enabled to stretch out his hand; and when he did so, it was made strong and well like the other.

This may teach you a lesson of obedience to the commands of God. He gives you many commands in His word. He tells you to forsake sin, and to love holiness; to resist Satan when he tempts you, and to overcome your sinful passions and tempers. Perhaps you say, "I cannot do this; I have no power." True, but He who gives the command, will help you to obey Him, if you try to do so in humble obedience, and faith, and prayer. "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, He increaseth strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." *Isaiah* xl. 29, 31.

CCLXIV.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES.



HERE were many people who followed Jesus in His journeys from place to place. But He now wished to choose from among them twelve men who might be apostles or missionaries, and go to other nations, and preach the gospel. Before Jesus chose these apostles, He went alone into a mountain to pray, and spent the whole night in prayer to God. But why did Jesus pray? He had no sins to confess; no pardon to ask; He did not need to be taught what He should do, for He was the all-wise God, and knew everything. Yes; but He was man as well as God; and, as man, He often felt sorrow and trouble, and then He loved to go to His Heavenly Father, and to speak to Him in prayer; and this comforted Him; and He prayed too for His disciples, and for all His people everywhere.

When it was morning, Jesus called His disciples, and chose from among them the twelve apostles. What were their names? Simon Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, and his brother John; Philip, Matthew, Bartholomew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon Zelotes, Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot. We have read of some of these before. Four of them had been called by Jesus, when they were fishing in the sea of Galilee; and Matthew

had been called when he was sitting at the receipt of custom.

Were the apostles all good men? Eleven of them really loved their Master, and wished to serve Him. They were weak and sinful like ourselves; but they had come in faith to Jesus for the pardon of their sins, and they had prayed for the Holy Spirit to renew and sanctify their hearts; and their prayers had been heard. But one of the apostles was very unlike the rest. This was Judas Iscariot. He had never prayed for pardon, nor for a new heart. Satan was in His heart, not the Holy Spirit of God. Judas pretended to love Jesus, but he did not really love Him. He was a hypocrite. He hated his Master, and at last betrayed Him to His cruel enemies. Jesus knew all this from the first; and it had also long before been prophesied that Jesus would be put to death by wicked men, and betrayed into their hands by one of His own disciples; by a pretended friend.

What did Jesus say to His apostles? He commanded them to go and preach. They were first to go among the Jews, and preach to them. The Jews had always been the chosen people of God; He had given them many promises of mercy, and therefore they first were to have the gospel. The apostles were to carry with them no gold nor silver; they were to go like poor men, not

caring for the things of this world. They were to work miracles by the power of Jesus, and in His name; to heal the sick, to cleanse the lepers, to cast out devils, and to raise the dead. These miracles were to be signs to those who saw them, that the apostles were sent by God, and that their message was true.

It was a great honor to the apostles to preach the gospel of Christ, and to work miracles in His name. But Jesus told them that they would have much to suffer too; He told them that they would be hated and persecuted, and imprisoned, and, perhaps, put to death, for His sake. But then Jesus comforted them, and told them not to be afraid. He said, "Your enemies may kill your body, but they have no power to kill your soul. Do not fear them, then, for if you endure to the end,

you shall be saved; but if you deny me, I shall also deny you before my Father which is in Heaven. If you wish really to be my disciples, you must be ready to suffer for my sake. I am soon going to die for you; will not you be willing to give up all you have for me? And if you lose your life for my sake, you shall have eternal life in Heaven." So Jesus blessed His disciples, and departed.

Christ still has faithful ministers who now preach His gospel in the world. He does not give them power to work miracles, but He promises to bless the word they preach to the salvation of those who hear them. How thankful we should be for this gospel! Let us pray that we may not only hear and read it, but really receive it into our hearts.

COLXV.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.



ONE day, Jesus went up into a mountain, and sat down; and His disciples came to Him, and He taught them there. He began by telling them who are truly blessed, who are really happy people in this world. Are they the rich, and the great? No; Jesus did not say that any people are happy because of riches and greatness; but He said, Blessed are the meek, and the humble, and the gentle; blessed are those that are sorry for sin, and

that ask for pardon; blessed are those who have new hearts, and those who are willing to give up all for righteousness' sake. These are the happy people, though they may be poor and despised, and have no possession upon earth. They are happy because they are holy; because they are at peace with God, and have a good hope that, when they die, they will be taken to be with Him for ever.

Then Jesus gave His disciples some beautiful lessons about love

to their fellow-creatures. He told them they ought to love not only their friends, but also their enemies. How kind God is to His enemies ! We deserve nothing, yet He is always giving us good things ; and He sends His blessings not only to His own people who love Him, but to those who do not love Him. The sun shines upon the wicked, as well as upon the righteous ; and the rain falls upon the unjust as it does upon the just. This should teach us to be kind, even to those who are not kind to us.

Then Jesus spoke to His disciples about prayer. He told them not to pray like the Pharisees, in the streets, to be seen of men ; but to pray in secret, in their own rooms, where only God could see them. And then He taught them how they ought to pray ; He taught them that beautiful prayer which we call "the Lord's prayer."

"Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name." Who is this kind Father ? It is God, the great God who made us, and has kept us all our lives. He calls Himself our Father, and He is willing that we should be His dear children. Then we should obey, and love, and honor Him, as children obey, and love, and honor their earthly parents. We should honor His name, for it is a very holy name, and never speak of it irreverently. Pray that you may always be an obedient child to this gracious and tender Father.

"Thy kingdom come ; thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven." What is this kingdom which we pray may "come ?" God is king over the world now ; He rules over

all ; nothing happens without His command. But His subjects, the people who are living in the world, are not all obedient subjects. They do not all love to obey His commands, and to do His will, as the holy angels do in Heaven. But the Bible tells us, that a time is coming when all will obey God as their King ; when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." We pray, therefore, that God will hasten this happy time ; and we ask Him also to enable us now to receive Him into our hearts, as our King, that He may reign there over all our thoughts and feelings.

"Give us this day our daily bread." All our good things come from God. The bread we eat, and the water we drink, are sent by Him ; and we ought to acknowledge His kindness in prayer, and to thank Him for His past mercies, and humbly ask for more. But Christ did not teach His disciples to ask for great and fine things. He told them only to pray for "daily bread," for what they really needed, and nothing more. We must learn to be content with little, and not wish for greater things than God gives us. If we have only bread to eat, let us be thankful for it ; it is more than many have, and much more than any of us deserve.

"And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them who trespass against us." Our dearest friends sometimes vex and trouble us ; and we too often vex and trouble them. Then we should learn to bear with one another, and to forgive one another. And we should remember, that we offend our Heavenly Father every day much more than our fellow-

creatures offend us: yet He spares us, if we humbly confess our sins, and ask for pardon. But how can we say to God, "Forgive us our trespasses," if we do not "forgive them that trespass against us?"

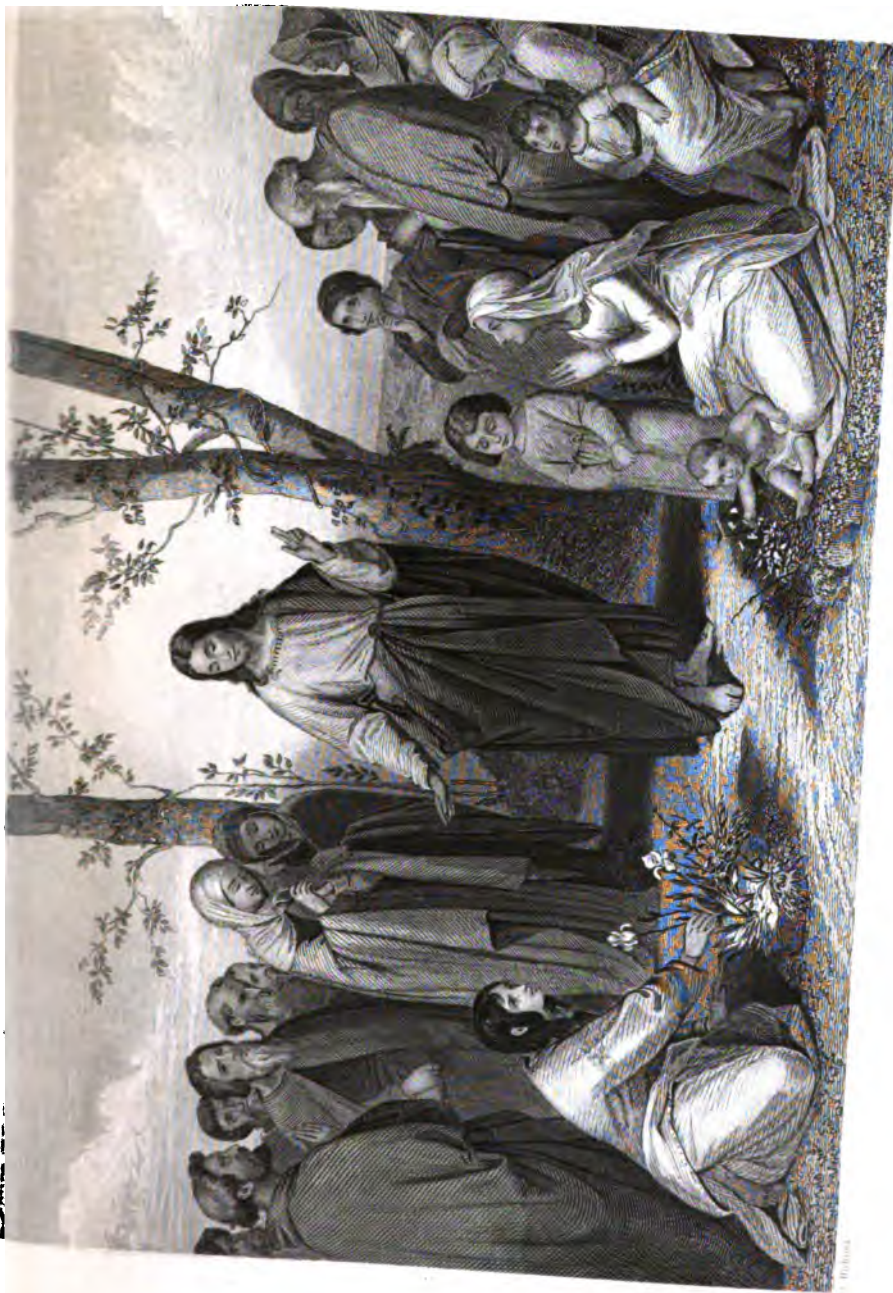
"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." This world is full of sin; and our own wicked hearts, and our great enemy Satan, are always leading us into what is wrong. Jesus, knowing our weakness, has taught us to seek help from God. Every morning, before we begin the work of the day, we ask Him to "lead us not into temptation;" not to let us go anywhere, nor do anything, which might bring us into sin. But we must not only *pray* to be kept from temptation, we must *watch* against it too; and we must try, in God's strength, to overcome it.

There is evil in the world too; sorrow and trouble, as well as sin. These evils must sometimes come upon us all. And who can comfort us then? Only God; He can make us happy even in sorrow; or He

can, if He so please, take the sorrow away. He says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." *Psalm* l. 15.

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen." All belongs to God, nothing can happen without His will. And if He is so powerful and so gracious, then we must trust to Him for whatever we want. He can help us in our greatest difficulties, because He is so powerful: and He will feel for us in all our sorrows, because He is so kind.

The last word in this beautiful prayer is "Amen." This word means, "so be it;" it means that we really believe, and feel, and wish, all that we say and ask for in that prayer. If not, we pray like the Pharisees and hypocrites, with the lips, but not with the heart; and God will never answer nor attend to such hypocritical prayers. Let us be thankful for this prayer, and try not only to remember it in our minds, but to feel it in our hearts.



J. B. H. 1840

THE RESURRECTION
OF JESUS CHRIST
FROM THE DEAD
BY J. B. H. 1840

CCLXVI

THE FLOWERS OF THE FIELD.



DID Jesus say anything more to His disciples while they were on the mount? Yes: many things. He told them not to seek for riches or possessions here on earth, because they might very soon lose all. Rust and moth might spoil their fine things; or thieves might break through, and steal them. But Jesus told His disciples to lay up treasures for themselves in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust can spoil, and where there are no thieves to break through and steal. And what are these heavenly treasures? Eternal life, everlasting happiness, and "a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Then Jesus told the people not to be very anxious about their bodies, nor to think and talk so much about what they should eat, and what they should drink, and how they should be clothed. He taught them, and He teaches us too, to learn a lesson from the birds of the air, and from the flowers of the field. Look at the little birds as they fly about among the trees, and sing in the branches. They do not trouble themselves with thinking how they shall get food for their young. They do not sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns. They make their nests, and lay their eggs; and when their little ones are hatched, they go, and seek food for them; and God teaches them to

find it in plenty. And if God takes so much care of these little birds, will He not take care of us? We are worth more, far more, than they.

And why should we be so anxious about clothing? Look at the flowers growing in the field, and learn another lesson from them. Look at their pretty blossoms, and their bright green leaves. They did not make that beautiful clothing for themselves; they had no thought, no care about it; and yet Solomon, in all his glory, was not dressed like one of these. Jesus says, "If God so clothed the flowers of the field, will He not also much more clothe you?"

Then when you walk in the fields, and see the birds, and the flowers, and the trees, remember that the same God who made and keeps them all, made and can keep us also. He has given more to us than to them. They cannot love and praise Him, for they have no soul, no power to think, as we have. The flowers open their pretty blossoms in the sunshine, and bloom for a few hours, and then fade away: and the birds sing among the trees, and are very happy for a little time, but they soon die and perish. But God has given us a soul and understanding, that we may learn to love and praise Him while we live, and that when we die we may be taken to Heaven, to love and praise Him for ever.

CCLXVII

THE NARROW WAY.



ALL the people in the world are taking a very long journey; they are travelling home to a far distant country. But they are not all travelling on the same road, and they are not all going to the same country. There are two roads, and every person is walking in one or other of them. At the beginning of each road is a gate. One of these gates is very wide; it is always standing open; and the path into which it leads is broad, and looks sunny and pleasant; and very many people are walking there. The other gate is strait and narrow. It is shut; but when any one knocks, it is always opened directly; and over it is written, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The path to which this strait gate leads, is very narrow; people often think it looks dull and gloomy; so they turn away from it, to walk in the broad way. Very few are seen in the narrow road; but those who are there like it very much, and wish others to walk with them. They say, "The way is a way of pleasantness, and the path is the path of peace."

And where do these two roads end? The narrow road leads to a bright, and glorious, and happy land. A country where there is no pain nor sorrow; where the inhabitants shall not say, "I am sick;" and where all tears are wiped away. But the broad road leads to another, and very different country. It ends in a place where there is "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." "There is a way which seemeth to be right, but the end thereof is the way of death." *Prov. xvi. 25.*

Jesus told his disciples of these two gates, and of the two ways to which they led. He said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be which find it." Do you know what is meant by all this? The broad way is the way of sin, and forgetfulness of God, and it leads to death. The narrow road is the way of repentance, and faith, and holiness, and it leads to Heaven. In which of these two roads are *you* walking?

CCLXVIII

THE TWO BUILDERS.



WHEN Jesus told his disciples this parable. Two men determined each to build himself a house.

One of these men was wise, the other was foolish. The wise man was very careful to choose a safe place upon which to build. At last he fixed upon a rock, that the foundation might be very strong; for he knew that heavy storms would soon come, and blow down his house, if it was not securely built. So this wise man finished his house, and went in, and lived there. But the foolish man thought nothing about the coming storms; so he went, and, without a foundation, built his house upon the sand. Not long after, the storm came; and a very fearful storm it was. "The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon the house" of the foolish builder, "and it fell, and great was the fall of it." But how was it with the wise man? The storm beat upon his house too. The winds blew against it, but they could not shake the strong rock on which it stood; the floods came, but they could not wash away the sure foundation; the storm passed

off, and the next day the house was as firm and secure as it had been before. "It fell not, for it was founded upon a rock."

Jesus told His disciples this parable, to teach a lesson to them, and to us also. What is meant by the foolish man who built his house, without a foundation, upon the sand? Those people are like him, who place their hopes and trust upon anything in this world. Whatever it may be, it cannot last for ever. It cannot stand against those fearful storms which must come upon us all. It cannot give comfort and safety in sorrow, and pain, and death, and at the day of judgment.

And what is meant by the wise man who built his house upon the rock? Those people are like him, whose trust and hope are placed only upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He is called the "Rock of Ages," and the "Sure Foundation," because He is so firm, so unchangeable. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." *Hebrews* xiii. 8. Those who trust in Him are safe, and will be safe for ever.

CCLXIX.

THE CENTURION.



WHEN Jesus had finished all these sayings to the people, He left the mountain, and went into Capernaum. As He drew near to the city, He saw some people coming to meet Him in great haste. They were messengers sent by a centurion in Capernaum, to ask a favor of Jesus.

What was a centurion? A man who had the command of a hundred soldiers. This centurion was not a Jew, but a Gentile; a Roman captain; but he had heard of Jesus, and sent to Him for help in trouble? Why was the centurion in trouble? Because "one of his servants who was dear unto him was sick." No doubt this was a faithful servant, who was grateful and affectionate to him, and whom he loved as his child.

When Jesus heard the centurion's message, He said directly, "I will come and heal the servant;" so He went with the messengers. The Jewish friends of the centurion praised him very much to Jesus. They said, "He is worthy, for whom Thou wilt do this; for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue." This centurion was kind, not only to his own family, but to all to whom he could do any good. Here is another lesson for us. Let us try to show kindness to everybody. To our own relations, and families, and friends, first; but to the whole world also if we can.

And particularly, like the centurion, let us love the Jewish nation, and do all we can to lead God's chosen people to the knowledge of that Saviour in whom they do not yet believe.

The Jews were right to feel grateful to the centurion for his kindness to them; but they were quite wrong if they thought that, because he was so good and kind, he deserved any favor from Jesus. The best people in the world are unworthy of any mercy. Our goodness is nothing in the sight of God. The centurion himself felt his unworthiness. He was a very humble man. When he remembered his own sins, and the great power and holiness of Jesus, he thought it would be too great an honor for him to receive the Saviour. So he sent some more friends with this message to Jesus: "Lord, trouble not Thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof; neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." His friends thought he was worthy; he himself felt that he was not. The best people are always the humblest people; and those who love and honor Jesus most, will think least of themselves, and of their own goodness.

Jesus was very much pleased with the humility and faith of the centurion. He turned round, and

said to the people who were with him, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And then he sent this message to the centurion, "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." And the servant was healed that very hour. There was no need for Jesus to see, and touch, and speak to him. Jesus could heal at any distance, and in any way he pleased. This was what the centurion believed, and as he believed, so it was—"they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick."

CCLXX.

THE WIDOW'S SON.

THE next day, Jesus went with His disciples into a city called Nain. As they came to the gate of the city, they met a great number of people. These people were not happy; they all looked very sad, and many of them were weeping. Why was this? It was a funeral procession. They were carrying out a dead man, and they were going to bury him.

You have often seen a funeral. Sometimes you have watched the black hearse moving slowly along, and the bearers carrying the coffin, "and the mourners going about the street." It is a solemn sight, and whenever we look at these things we should remember the sad cause of them all—sin. "Sin entered into the world, and death by sin." *Romans* v. 12.

One person in the crowd looked more unhappy than all the rest. This was the mother of the dead man. "He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." Perhaps she was old, and had long

ago lost all her other relations and friends; only her son was left, and he was kind, and dutiful, and affectionate, and did all he could to help and comfort her; but now, he too was gone, and the widow was left alone. What a sad world this is! Trouble comes to all. It must come to *you* some time or other; and perhaps long before you are as old as this poor widow. Even children may lose all their relations, all their friends, and be left alone in the world. You may have to weep over your parents, as this poor woman wept over her child. And who will comfort you then? There is One who will never, never forsake you, if you make Him your friend. The Lord Jesus Christ is "a friend who sticketh closer than a brother." *Proverbs* xviii. 24. He says to every one who loves and trusts in Him, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." *Hebrews* xiii. 5.

When Jesus saw the poor mother weeping so bitterly, he pitied her very much, and said to her, "Weep

not." Then he touched the bier upon which the dead body was lying; and the people who carried it stood still. Jesus was going to do a very wonderful miracle; he was going to comfort the poor widow by raising her son to life again. He spoke to the dead man, and said, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise." And he that was dead heard and obeyed the voice of Jesus; for it was the voice of God; and he sat up and

began to speak. Then Jesus gave him to his mother; and the widow went home full of joy and thankfulness, with her dear son.

We read no more of this mother and son; but we may hope that they both loved and served that kind Saviour who had done so much for them. The young man was raised up to be a comfort to his poor mother, and to take care of her in her old age.

COLXXI.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE HUMBLE.



HE cities in which Jesus preached, and worked so many miracles, were, most of them, wicked, unbelieving cities. The people who lived in them, would not receive Jesus as the Messiah, nor believe in Him, nor love Him; and, therefore, he often reprov'd those cities, and told the people how dreadful their condemnation would be in the day of judgment, if they did not repent. He said, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for you."

And why did Jesus say this? Because Sodom had not that knowledge of the gospel which these cities had. Jesus never preached and worked miracles in Sodom, as He did in Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum. These cities had more knowledge, more means, and opportunities, than Sodom ever had, and, therefore, their sin would be

greater if they did not make use of all those blessings; for "to whom much is given, of them will much be required." *Luke xii. 48.*

But while Jesus mourned over the unbelief of those wicked cities, there was something that made Him rejoice. What was this? The seventy disciples whom he had sent out to preach and work miracles in His name, a little time before, returned with joy, saying "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Thy name." Jesus had given to them the wonderful power of casting out devils, and it was a great privilege to the disciples to be so honored; but Jesus said to them, "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." It was a far greater honor for the disciples to be known in Heaven, and to have their names written there, than to have the praise and glory of this world.

And at that time, Jesus himself also rejoiced, and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." The blessings of salvation were the things Jesus was speaking of, and he rejoiced because it was God's will that "these things" should be made known even to babes, that is, to the poorest, and the youngest, and the most ignorant, if they would receive into their hearts the gospel which He preached to them. Many of the rich, and the wise, and the learned, were too proud and self-righteous to receive the gospel; and therefore the blessings Christ had to give, did these people no good; they could understand nothing of such things;—they were "hid" from their minds.

And so it is now. Human knowledge, and worldly wisdom, cannot enable people to understand rightly the gospel of Christ. Only the Holy Spirit's teaching can help them to do this; and those "who are wise in their own eyes, and pru-

dent in their own sight," will not seek to be thus taught; and so they remain in ignorance of the gospel and all its blessings;—it is "hid" from them; and it is very sad, to think, that "if the gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost." 2 Cor. iv. 3.

But the humble, and the meek, who pray to be instructed by God, will be enabled to understand the things of salvation, even though they know nothing besides. "The meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach His way." *Psalm xxv. 9.* They are the "babes" to whom our Heavenly Father is pleased to reveal "these things," and whom Christ rejoices to receive, and to save. Are you young and ignorant? If you are willing to be taught, God is so merciful, that He is ready to teach you by His Spirit, if you ask Him. And the Lord Jesus Christ, too, is ready to receive even the little children who come to Him, and to attend to their prayers and their praises, for He was once pleased to say, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise." *Matt. xxi. 16.*

CCLXXII.

REST FOR THE WEARY.

UST after Jesus Christ had spoken in this way of the blessings which God had been pleased to reveal unto "babes," He invited others also to come to Him, that they too might enjoy the same blessings. He said "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Now who were the people to whom Jesus then spoke so particularly? Who are the weary, and the heavy laden?

There are many who are weary, many who are heavy laden, in the world. Some people are weary with poverty, and pain, and sickness. Some with sorrow, and trouble, and afflictions of different kinds. All these things are very hard and heavy to bear; and those who are obliged to bear them, often feel as Job did, when he said, "My soul is weary of my life." *Job* x. 1.

But there is another burden, heavier still than these, and more difficult to bear; and that is—the burden of sin. This is a burden all have, but all do not feel its weight. Proud, self-righteous, unhumiliated people, do not feel their sin; it is no burden to them, for it gives them no pain, no weariness at all. But when people are convinced of sin, by God's Holy Spirit, then they feel how heavy it is; so heavy that it must sink them down forever, if it is not removed, and taken

away. And who can take it away? Jesus Christ himself; and He is willing to do so, and this is why He invites sinners in the gospel to come to Him; and humble, penitent people, who feel the burden of sin, are those whom He meant when He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden."

But how can people come to Christ? By faith and prayer. They must come feeling that they are sinners, and cannot help themselves; and then they must ask Jesus to help them;—to take off their burden; that is, to pardon and to save them.

But what is the "rest" Jesus promises to give? He will give rest *now* to all who come to Him for pardon. He will give them peace in their hearts, and in their souls; and He has prepared an eternal rest for them, which they will enjoy hereafter in Heaven.

But Jesus said something more to the "weary and heavy laden." He said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." What does this mean?

To take a yoke upon us, means to submit, willingly and obediently, and to be ready to bear with patience whatever may be put upon us. Now Christ has a yoke for all His people to wear;—He requires from them obedience to His com-

mands, and submission to His will. And they have a burden to bear too. Jesus said, that His disciples must "take up the cross, and follow Him." This means, that those who really love Jesus, must have something to suffer for His sake. The apostle Paul says, "If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he must suffer persecution" of some kind or other. Jesus had a much heavier cross, a much heavier burden to bear, than His people can

have. He bore it all for them, and He bore it meekly and patiently; and so now He tells us to be like Him, to learn of Him, for He is "meek and lowly in heart." His "yoke is easy," and His "burden light," for He himself gives His people strength to bear all He lays upon them, and makes them happy and peaceful, whatever they may suffer for His sake; so that they feel that what He said is true indeed, "Ye shall find rest unto your souls."

CCLXXIII.

THE PENITENT WOMAN.



ONE day, a Pharisee, named Simon, asked Jesus to dine with him; so Jesus went home with the Pharisee, and sat down to meat. There was in that place, a woman who had been a great sinner; and when she saw Jesus go into the house, she followed Him, and came and stood behind Him, and began to weep very bitterly. Then she took out a box of ointment, and poured the ointment on Jesus' feet, and anointed them, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

Why did the woman do this? Why did she weep, and show so much love to Jesus? She wept because she felt sorry for her sins; and she loved Jesus because she knew that He could save her from her sins. Jesus was willing to receive and pardon this poor humble woman; but the proud Pharisee, who

thought himself very good, hated and despised her, and spoke unkindly of her.

Jesus knew how angry Simon was, and He turned to him, and said, "Simon, I have something to say to thee. A man had two debtors. One of them owed him five hundred pence, the other owed him fifty, and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, which of them would love him most?" Simon answered, "I suppose he to whom he forgave most." Jesus said, "Yes; thou hast answered rightly." And then Jesus turned to the woman, and said to Simon, "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But he to whom little is forgiven, loveth little." And Jesus said to the woman, "Thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

How much happier this poor woman was, who felt her sinfulness, and went to Jesus for pardon, than the proud Pharisee who thought himself too good to need a Saviour!

she was forgiven; but he had no forgiveness, because he did not ask for it. Simon was a sinner as well as the woman. All are sinners in the sight of God. "None doeth good, no, not one." *Romans* iii. 12. But the humble and penitent, who come to Jesus in faith and prayer, will surely be forgiven. He says to them, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." *Isaiah* i. 18.

CCLXXIV.

THE PHARISEES' UNBELIEF.

CHRIST showed His power by casting out devils, and doing many other wonderful works, yet the proud Pharisees would not believe Him to be the Son of God. They even said, that He cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub, or Satan, the prince of the devils, and not by His own power. This was very wicked; and Jesus solemnly warned them of their great sin in rejecting Him. Then He told them this parable.

A certain man was possessed of an evil spirit, which, after a time, went out of him, and wandered about in the earth, seeking rest. But he found no rest; wicked spirits never can; so at last, he said, "I will return where I was before;" and he went back to the man, and found him ready and willing to receive him. Then the devil went

and called seven other spirits, wicked like himself, and they all entered into the man, and dwelt with him; "and the last state of that man was worse than the first."

When Jesus had ended the parable, He said, "So shall it be unto this wicked generation." What did Jesus mean? The Jews, like the man in the parable, had long been under Satan's power,—ignorant and unbelieving. But now, Jesus was preaching and working miracles among them; the gospel was being made known to them; and the power of Satan was lessened; he was driven away for a little time, like the evil spirit in the parable. But if the Jews would not receive Christ, Satan would soon return, and take possession of them again, and then they would become more hardened in their sins than they were before. And so it was. The Jews did reject

Jesus, and they have been in a very sad state of unbelief from that time until now.

But what may *we* learn from the parable? We all are, by nature, under the power of Satan, and only Jesus Christ can deliver us from his power. Now there are many people who hear the gospel, as the Jews did, and know what is right, and try, but in their own strength, to do what is right;—to overcome some of their sinful tempers and passions; that thus they may appear better in the sight of men. These people are then like the man in the parable, when the evil spirit went away from him for a little time. But their hearts are not changed; and, there-

fore, in the sight of God, they are as wicked as they were before. And Satan soon returns to them; he comes and dwells within them, tempting them to new and greater sins, and making them worse and worse; till, at last, if God's mercy prevent not, he brings them to that dreadful place, "prepared for the devil and his angels."

Let the unbelief of the Jews, and the awful state in which they have remained so long, be a warning to us. And let us pray, not only that our outward conduct may be right in the sight of men, but also, that our hearts may be right in the sight of God.

CCLXXV.

THE FAMILY OF JESUS.



NOW, when Jesus was teaching the people, His mother and His brethren came to the door of the house where He was, and asked to see Him. He turned to His disciples, and looked affectionately upon them, and said, "Behold my mother, and my brethren! Whosoever doeth the will of God, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother."

All those who truly love God, belong to the family of Jesus;—all who have repented, and come to Christ for pardon, and whose hearts have been made new by the Holy Spirit. What a happy family this

is! God is their father; and He says to them, "Ye are my sons and daughters." Jesus Christ is their brother; and He "sticketh closer" than any earthly brother; for "He is a brother born for adversity." And the Holy Spirit is their friend and comforter in all their sorrows; for Jesus said, "I will send you another comforter, even the Spirit of truth."

There is no anger, no quarrelling, in the happy family. All is love among them. Christ has said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." *John* xiii. 35. A home is prepared for this family;

but not a home on earth. Their home is in Heaven. Jesus said, "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." *John* xiv. 2. And He will at last come and take them to that happy home, to dwell there with Him for ever.

Do you belong to this happy family? Not if you love sin; for

all God's people must be holy people. And it is sad to think that those who do not love Jesus, belong to another and a very different family—the family of Satan. Pray then that you may be of Christ's family on earth, that when you die, you may be taken to dwell in their happy home in Heaven.

CCLXXVI.

THE RICH WORLDLING.

JESUS often warned the people of the sin of covetousness, and love of the world. One day He told them this parable.

There was a man who had very great riches and possessions. He was so rich, that he could not tell what to do with all his goods. So he said to himself, "What shall I do? I must pull down my barns, and build greater; and there I will put all my fruits and my goods. And then I shall have great possessions laid up for many years; and I can take my ease, and eat and drink, and be merry." This was what the rich man said: but God said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; and then what will become of all these good things which thou hast laid up for many years?" Before morning, that poor man's soul was in another world;—but in what world? Not in Heaven; for God says, that "no covetous man, who is an idolater," can enter

there. The rich man had forgotten God while he lived; and when he died, he was sent away from God and Heaven for ever.

How wicked and foolish it is to trust in worldly things, and to love them so much! The Bible says, "If riches increase, set not thy heart upon them." *Psalms* lxxii. 10. We must lose them soon. They may be taken from us; or we may die, and be taken from them; for we cannot carry riches with us to the grave; "We brought nothing into this world, and we can carry nothing out." *1 Tim.* vi. 7. Then we should pray to be enabled to set our "affections on things above, not on things on earth;" and seek for a possession in Heaven; that when we die, we may receive the crown of glory which God will give to all those who love Him, and the "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." *1 Peter* i. 4.

CCLXXVII.

THE FIG-TREE WITHOUT FRUIT.



HIS is another parable which Jesus told the people, and a very solemn parable it is. He said, a certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit on it, and found none. Then he said to the dresser of the vineyard, "These three years I come, seeking fruit on *this fig-tree*, and find none; cut it down; why should it stay in the ground any longer?" But the dresser of the vineyard answered, "Lord, let it alone this year also; and I will attend to it, and dig about it, and manure it; perhaps it will bear fruit next year, and then all will be well; and if not, after that thou shalt cut it down."

We do not read whether the fig-tree did bear fruit the next year, or whether it did not, and was cut down; for Jesus said no more about it. But what must we learn from the parable? What does it mean?

God is the master of the vineyard, and those people who profess to serve Him, are like fig-trees growing in the vineyard. If these people really love God, His grace in their hearts will enable them to bring forth fruit; good fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. God looks into their hearts to see if these holy fruits are growing there; and if He finds none, He is grieved, for He does not care for profession only; He wants love and obedience. Now God is seeking fruit in you. Perhaps He has sought a long time, and found none; and this may be the last year He will seek at all; the last year you may have to live; the last year you may have to pray for pardon, and grace, and salvation. Next year you may be in another world; and that world will not be Heaven, if you bring forth no fruit to the glory of God here. Remember that *now* is "the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation."

COLXXVIII.

THE SOWER.



AMAN went out to sow seed. As he walked along, some of the seed fell by the road-side; and the birds came and devoured it. Then the sower came to rough stony ground; and some of the seed fell there. It soon sprang up; but there was no depth of earth for the roots; so the corn was thin and bad; and when the sun was hot, it withered away. Some more of the seed fell among thorns. This grew up too; but the thorns grew up with it, and choked and spoilt it; and the fruit which it brought forth was good for nothing.

And was all the seed which the man sowed wasted and lost? No; at last he came to good ground. This ground had been dug and made ready. So the man cast his seed in there; and it sprang up, and grew, and brought forth fruit in great abundance.

But what may we learn from this parable? What is meant by the sower, and the seed, and the ground? The seed is the word of God; every one who teaches the word of God to others is like the sower, and the hearts of those who hear or read that word, are like the different kinds of ground. Faithful ministers sow the seed, when they preach to the people every Sabbath day. And parents and teachers sow the seed, when they teach their children the word of God.

Some do not attend much to these holy lessons; and when the sermon or the chapter is finished, they go away, and soon forget all about it. Satan takes the word out of their hearts, as the birds took away the seed which fell by the road-side.

Others are very attentive, and pleased with what they hear or read. When they are told of God's happy people, they wish to be like them, and to live with them in Heaven for ever. And perhaps they try to serve God for a little time; but they try in their own strength, and therefore, they do not try long. They soon grow tired of God's service, and think it hard and troublesome; and, at last, all their good wishes die away as the corn which sprang up in the stony ground withered because it had no root.

Some people profess to love God, but then they love and serve the world too. They think a great deal about their riches, and their business, and their pleasure; and very little about God and holy things. Christ says to these people, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Worldly thoughts will choke God's word in their hearts, as the thorns choked the seed which grew up among them, and they will bring forth no fruit pleasing to God.

But who are they who receive the seed into good ground? They are those people who before they read

or hear God's word, pray that their hearts may be made ready to receive it. People who, after they have read or heard God's word, pray that the Holy Spirit may enable them to understand and remember it, and to

serve God with all their hearts. God will hear the prayer of these people. He will give them His grace, and enable them to bring forth "the fruits of the spirit," to His glory.

CCLXXIX.

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES.



CERTAIN man had a field, and sowed in it some good seed. Soon after, an enemy, who saw what was done, came secretly in the night, and sowed bad seed among the wheat, and went away. The bad seed which he sowed is called tares,—a very troublesome plant in a field of corn. In a little time the corn sprang up, and then the tares appeared also. When the servants of the householder came back to look at the field, they were surprised and vexed to find it covered with weeds; and they went directly to tell their master. They said, "Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it tares? Their master answered, "An enemy has done this." Then the servants asked again, "Shall we go and gather them up?" But he said, "No; for in gathering up the tares you might, perhaps, root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together till the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather together first the

tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

And how did Jesus explain this parable? He told the people, that the field is the world, and God Himself is the owner of that field. The good seed are God's own children; but the tares are the children of Satan, and he is the enemy who sowed them. The righteous and the wicked are mingled together in this world; it is God's will that they should be; and sometimes we cannot tell one from the other; because the wicked often profess to be God's servants, and so deceive their fellow-creatures. But they cannot deceive God; and a time will come when He will separate them from those who are really righteous. "The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace

of fire. Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

What a glorious day that will be for the people of God; but how dreadful for all those who do not

really love Him! Pray that you may be made ready now for that awful time, that you may not cry, as many will when too late, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved!" *Jer. viii. 20.*

OCLXXX.

MORE PARABLES.

JESUS told the people many other parables at this time. He told them that the kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field; and which grew into a tree, and the birds came and made their nests in the branches. And again he said, "The kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till all was leavened."

What is meant by the kingdom of Heaven? Sometimes, it means the state of glory hereafter; but in these parables it means, the Gospel of Christ in the world, or the grace of God in the heart.

These parables teach us something about what the Gospel of Christ is doing in the world, and what the grace of God does in the heart. The work goes on gradually. By nature, we all love sin, and hate holiness; but whenever the Holy Spirit comes into any of our hearts, they become changed, as the meal was changed by the leaven hid in it. Then we begin to hate, and resist, and overcome sin, and to

love God, and holiness, and heavenly things. God's grace grows in the heart. At first, it is very, very small; but after a time, it becomes larger and stronger, like the mustard-seed which was so little when it was put into the ground, but which grew at last into a great tree.

Do you really love God? If you do, it is the Holy Spirit who has made you love Him. But then you must seek to love Him more; to "grow in grace." *2 Peter iii. 18.* Pray as the disciples did, "Lord, increase our faith;" and "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." *Phil. i. 6.*

Jesus told the people another parable about a field in which was hid some very great treasure. Many people passed through this field; but as they walked along idly and carelessly, they did not find the treasure. At last, a man came who was very different from these careless people. He knew that treasure was hid in the field, and he determined to seek till he found it. So he kept his eyes fixed on the ground, and searched carefully at every step; and soon, to his great

joy, he found the treasure. Then he wished to have it for his own; so he first hid it again, that it might not be lost while he was away, and then went home, and sold his house, and his goods, and bought the field, and took possession of the treasure. He parted with every thing he had; but he did not care for this, because the hid treasure more than paid for all.

And what is meant by the treasure hid in the field? The knowledge of Christ, and of His salvation. This is worth more than all the riches of the world. "The price of wisdom is above rubies." *Job xxviii. 18.* But we shall never find this treasure if we do not seek for it. We must seek it in God's word, not carelessly, but diligently, in faith and prayer. And if we thus seek we shall find. "If thou seekest it as silver, and searchest for it as hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." *Prov. ii. 3. 4.*

We have nothing to pay for this treasure; it is all God's free gift. But we may have something to give up for it. The first disciples of Christ "forsook all, and followed him;" and we must be ready to do so too, should it be God's will. And if we have Christ in our heart, we need not care for any worldly possession; for He promises to give His people all that is good for them in this world, and, "in the world to come, eternal life." *Mark x. 30.*

Again, Jesus said, "The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

What is meant by the pearl of great price? Just what is meant by the hid treasure;—Christ and His salvation. All the people in the world are searching for pearls, like the merchant-man in the parable,—that is, all are seeking for something to satisfy them, and to make them happy. But nothing on earth can do this. Christ alone can make us truly rich, really happy. When we have found Him, (and we shall find Him, if we seek in faith and prayer) we have all we want, just as the merchant-man had all he wanted, when he had found the one pearl of great price.

Then Jesus told the people another parable. "The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away."

You remember, when Christ called some of His disciples, He said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." This meant that they were to preach the Gospel; that is, the net cast to catch the souls of men. But when a net is cast into the sea, bad fish are often caught, as well as good. And so, when the Gospel is preached, bad people, hypocrites, are brought into a profession of religion; they have the name and the appearance of Christians, though they are not so in heart and in reality. At present, the true and the pretended people of God are all mingled together, like the fish in the net; but a day is coming when a separation will be made—that day is the day of judgment. Then, Christ

Himself will "send his angels, and they shall sever the wicked from the just," and cast them away from His presence; but His own people He will receive to Himself to be with Him for ever.

CCLXXXI

THE STORM CALMED.

WHEN Jesus had finished talking to the people, in the evening, he went with His disciples into a ship, to cross over the sea of Galilee. When they had gone a little way, a very heavy storm came on. The wind blew, and the waves beat into the ship, and the disciples were very much frightened. Where was Jesus? He was with them; but He was so weak and tired, that He had fallen asleep on a pillow, in the hinder part of the ship. He knew the fears of His disciples, and could take care of them still; but their faith was feeble and small, and therefore they were afraid; and they ran to Him, and awoke Him, and cried, "Lord, save us, we perish." Then Jesus arose directly, and spoke to the winds and sea, and said, "Be still;" and there was a great calm.

Why did the winds and sea obey the command of Jesus? Because He was God, the God who made them, and everything in the world; who said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further; *Job xxxviii. 11.* And Jesus can do something still more wonderful. He can calm and quiet our angry passions, and say to them, "Peace, be still." Let us ask Him to do so, whenever these sinful feelings arise in our hearts; and He will attend to us, as He did to the poor fearful disciples.

CCLXXXII.

THE LEGION.



WHEN the storm was quieted, the ship sailed on and soon came to land. Then Jesus and His disciples went ashore at a place called Gadara. A poor man was living here who was in a very sad state. He had an unclean spirit; and this evil spirit made him wild and furious like a madman. He did not live in a house, but among the tombs; and sheltered himself in the caves in which the dead were buried. He was so violent, that he frightened people who passed that way. Many times he had been bound with fetters and chains; but he soon broke his chains in pieces, and escaped, and ran wildly about, crying, and cutting himself with stones. When this poor man saw Jesus coming, he ran to meet Him, and fell down and worshipped Him. The devil could not resist Christ; for Christ came to conquer Satan, and to deliver men from his power. So Jesus spoke to the evil spirit, and said, "What is thy name?" The devil answered, "My name is Legion;" that is, a very great number; for many devils had entered into this poor man. Then Jesus commanded the unclean spirits *to come out*. They were obliged to obey; but these wicked spirits wanted still to be troublesome if they could; so they asked Jesus to let *them go* into a great herd of swine which was feeding near. Jesus

gave them leave: and then the devils went out of the man, and entered into the swine; and the swine instantly became wild and furious, and they rushed down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. It was wrong of the people of Gadara to have these swine; for the Jews were commanded in the law not to eat or keep swine. They were punished now by Jesus for their disobedience.

Were the people of Gadara glad to see Jesus? No; they liked their worldly possessions much better than they liked the preaching of the Gospel; and they were so angry at the loss of the swine, that they sent to Jesus, and prayed Him to depart from their country. So Jesus went away, and we do not read that He ever came to Gadara again; for if people will not receive Christ, He will leave them to themselves, and to their own sinful ways; and what will become of them then?

Do we read anything more of the poor man? Yes; when the Gadarenes came out, they found him sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. He was calm now, and peaceful and happy: for Jesus had cast out the devils, and put his own spirit into that poor man's heart. The man loved Jesus, and wanted to stay with Him always; and when Jesus went away, he asked to go too. But Jesus said, "No; go home to thy friends, and

tell them what the Lord hath done for thee." There was work for the man to do at home. He might be useful to his country people, and preach the Gospel to them when Jesus was gone. The man obeyed directly. He was sorry to leave his Saviour, whom he loved so much; but he knew that Christ's command was right and best, and he was willing to obey it. And he knew that Jesus would be with him still, in his heart, though not seen with his bod-

ily eyes; and that when his work was done, he should go to Heaven, and see His Saviour again, and never part from Him any more.

We are all, like this poor man, under Satan's power, till Jesus himself makes us free. We should pray God, then, to change our hearts; to give us a right mind, and a new spirit; and when we know Him ourselves, we must try to teach others to know Him also.

CCLXXXIII.

THE RULER'S DAUGHTER.



HERE was a ruler of the synagogue, named Jairus, who had one little girl—his only child; she was about twelve years old. This little girl became very ill, so ill that her parents feared she would soon die; so her father went to Jesus, and asked him to come and heal the child. Then Jesus and his disciples went with Jairus to his house. As they walked along, a great many people followed them, and crowded round to see Jesus. One of these people was a poor woman who had been ill a very long time; she had asked a great many physicians to cure her, and they had tried all they could to make her well; but nothing did her any good; she grew worse and worse. At last, this poor woman heard of Jesus, and of all that He had done for sick people; and she had faith to believe that He would

heal her too. So, when she saw Him coming, she went very gently behind Him, and touched the fringe of the garment which He wore; for she said, "If I can only touch the hem of His garment, I shall be cured." And was she cured? Yes; as soon as she touched Jesus, she was made well. He had seen her all the time, and He knew her faith, and was willing to heal her. Then Jesus turned round, and said to the people who were standing near, "Who touched me?" They all denied that they had touched Jesus; but Peter pointed to the crowd, and said, "Perhaps some of them have touched thee." Jesus answered, "Somebody has touched me, for I feel that virtue has gone out of me." It was not a common touch, but the touch of faith, which Jesus meant. When the poor woman saw that she could not be hid, she came out from the crowd, and fell down trembling

before Jesus, and confessed all the truth. And was Jesus angry with her? No; He is never angry with those who come to Him in faith and humility; He said to her, "Daughter, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." So she went home to her house, well and happy. All those who come to Jesus will be saved, and made happy. He is the good physician; He can cure the soul of the worst of all diseases—sin.

Then Jesus went on; but before He came to the house, a messenger was sent to the poor father to tell him some very sad news. What did the messenger say? He said, "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master." But Jesus could comfort Jairus still; He said to him, "Fear not; only believe, and I will make her well." So they all went on, and came to the ruler's house. Then Jesus went into the room where the little girl lay. She was lying on the bed, quite dead; and her parents and her friends were standing round weeping. They all felt very sad; for they thought that she would never speak to them again; and that they should never play with her, nor teach her any more. But Jesus said, "Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth." Jesus meant that He could bring her to life as easily as He could wake her if she

was asleep; but the people did not understand what He meant, nor did they believe in His power; and they began to mock Him. Then Jesus sent them all away; only He let the father and mother stay, and Peter, and James, and John; and He went to the child, and took her by the hand, and said, "Maid, arise." And the little girl's spirit came into her again, and she arose and walked; she was quite well and strong; and He commanded her parents to give her meat.

This is a very wonderful story. We often hear of the deaths of children as young as this little girl; but we do not hear that they are ever raised to life again: for Jesus is not pleased to go about working miracles now. But if children die happily, at peace with God through Jesus Christ, then we may feel comforted in their deaths, though we cannot hope that they will come back to us again. For we know that their souls are gone to God in Heaven; and there they will be happier than Jairus's little daughter was when she was raised to life again; for she came back to a world of sin, and sorrow, and death; but in the world where holy children go when they die, "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." *Rev. xxi. 4.*

CCLXXXIV.

THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

SOON after Jesus had raised the little girl to life, He went to Nazareth, His old home, where He had been brought up. He worked many miracles as He went along. He cast out devils, and healed the sick, and opened the eyes of the blind. And when He came to Nazareth, He taught in the synagogue there; and all the people wondered at His great wisdom and knowledge. They said, "Is not this the carpenter's son? What wisdom is this which is given Him?" For these people did not know that Jesus was the Son of God, and that He was God Himself; and that, therefore, He had all this wonderful wisdom.

While Jesus was going about preaching, John the Baptist was still in prison, where he had been cast by Herod, the cruel tetrarch of Galilee. John had been in prison a long time; he could not see Jesus; but he heard of His miracles; for Jesus had sent a message to John to tell him of what He did. At last, Herod's birthday came; and on this day, Herod made a great feast for all his lords, and nobles, and captains. How did they amuse themselves? Not in a right and wise way; they spent their time that day in eating, and drinking, and dancing, and foolish and wicked conversation. What a sad way this was of keeping a birthday! Our birthdays may be

very happy days; but they ought to be very solemn days too. We should think then about past mercies, and past sins; and pray for pardon, and for grace to enable us to serve God better for the time to come. Herod thought nothing about such things as these.

Herod's wife, Herodias, had a daughter named Salome; and Salome came in, and danced before all the company; and Herod was pleased with her, because she danced very well and gracefully. So when she had finished, Herod called her and praised her very much, and said, "Ask whatever thou wilt, and I will give it thee." Salome did not answer Herod directly, but she ran to her mother, and said, "The king has promised to give me anything I ask; what shall I choose?" Herodias was a very wicked woman, and she had taught her daughter to be as wicked as herself. Salome had learnt to dance, and to dress, and to please men; but she had not learnt to know and please God. Herodias had brought her up for this world,—not for Heaven. Salome was a vain, and wicked, and cruel girl. It is sad when children are educated as Salome was. How thankful those should be who have good and kind parents and friends, who teach them early to love God, and bring them up for His service and glory!

John the Baptist, before he was

imprisoned, had talked to Herod and Herodias, and warned them of their sins. But they only hated him for his faithfulness; and when he was put into prison, they did not forget their hatred. Herodias had long wished him to be killed; and now the time was come when she could have her wish. So as soon as Salome said, "What shall I ask to be given me?" this wicked mother answered, "Ask for the head of John the Baptist." But was not Salome frightened and sorry when Herodias said this? No, she was pleased; for sin had made her heart as hard and cruel as her mother's. So she ran back joyfully to the king, and said, "I will that thou give me, by and by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist." Herod was sorry. He knew it was very wicked to kill John, and that God would be angry if he did; but he foolishly thought that he must keep his promise to Salome; he was afraid of displeasing her, and his wicked company, though he was not afraid of displeasing God. So he gave the command; and the executioner went and beheaded John in the prison, and took the bleeding head, and put it upon a charger, or large dish, and gave it to Salome; and she carried it to her mother.

This is a dreadful story; but we may learn something from it. It teaches us how sin may end, if not resisted and overcome by God's grace. Anger and hatred may end even in murder; and therefore the Bible tells us, that "whosoever *hateth* his brother is a *murderer*." 1 John iii. 15.

But did not God punish these wicked murderers? Yes; He did

punish them. Herod was never happy afterwards; he never knew peace again. When he heard of Jesus, and His wonderful works, he said, "This is John whom I beheaded; he is risen from the dead." And then Herod felt full of fear, thinking that John, perhaps, was coming to punish him; for the murder was always in Herod's mind, troubling him, and making him unhappy every day he lived. And we read in history that, some time after this, Herod offended the Emperor of Rome, and was taken away from his government, and sent to a distant country, where he and Herodias died miserably.

What became of Salome? Her end was still more dreadful. It is said, that, many years after, when crossing a frozen river in the winter time, the ice broke, and she fell in; and the sharp ice cut off her head, and killed her, as she had desired John the Baptist to be killed so many years before. "The wicked shall not be unpunished." *Prov.* xi. 21.

When the disciples heard of the death of John, they took up his body, and laid it in a tomb; and then they went, and told Jesus. It was sad for them to lose their dear friend; but they had much to comfort them in their sorrow. They knew that John's happy spirit was now in a world where there is no more death nor sorrow;—that world which was shown to the other John, many years after, in vision, when he saw "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Those happy souls are ever "before the throne of God, and serve Him

day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." *Rev. vii. 15, 17.*

CCLXXXV.

THE FIVE THOUSAND FED.

JESUS went to a desert place near Bethsaida, and a multitude of people followed Him there. They came to hear Jesus preach; and they stayed many hours attending to what He said. At last it began to grow dark; and then the disciples came to Jesus, and asked Him to send the people away, that they might buy themselves food; for they had fasted all day. But Jesus said, "No; I will not send them away fasting, for they might faint by the way. Give them food here to eat." The disciples answered, "We have not food enough for them. We have only five loaves, and two fishes; and what are they among so many?" But Jesus told his disciples to make the people sit down. There were about five thousand men, and a great many women and children; and they all sat down on the green grass, by fifties in a company. Then Jesus took the bread, and the fishes, and lifted up his eyes to Heaven, and thanked God who had given them this food; and broke the bread in pieces, and divided the fishes, and told the disciples to feed the multitude who were sitting round. So the disciples took the bread and fishes,

and gave some to every one of the people. But was not the food soon all gone? No; Jesus made the five loaves and the two fishes more than enough for that great multitude; they all ate, and were filled. And when they had finished, Jesus told his disciples to gather up the crumbs, and little pieces that were left, that nothing might be lost; so they filled twelve baskets with fragments. This may teach us not to waste the food which God has given us. Many poor hungry people would be very thankful for the little pieces of bread and meat which we do not want, and sometimes carelessly throw away.

This is a very wonderful miracle. It may remind us of some miracles we read about before, in the Old Testament history—of the increase of the poor widow's oil and meal, which fed Elijah, and the woman, and her son, so many days; and of the food which God sent to His servant Elisha, and the sons of the prophets.

Was it the power of Elijah and Elisha that multiplied the oil, and the meal, and the bread? No; when the prophets worked those miracles, they did so by the power of God; but when Jesus increased the loaves

and the fishes, he did it by his own power; for Jesus is God. And a little time afterwards, he again fed four thousand people with a few loaves and fishes; and then seven baskets full of fragments were taken up. How kind he was to his hungry suffering people!

God gives us bread to eat every day we live, and we should be very thankful to Him for it. But He can give us better food than this. He can give us food for our souls, as well as for our bodies. What is this food? Jesus Christ; He is the "bread of life," the "living bread which came down from Heaven," of which the manna in the wilderness

was the type. *John* vi. 35, 49—51. Christ is compared to bread, because he can keep the soul from perishing, as bread can keep the body from dying of hunger. But bread will do our bodies no good, if we do not eat it; and so Christ will do our souls no good, if we do not receive Him into our hearts by faith. The bread we eat only keeps our bodies alive for a little time; but Christ can keep our souls to eternal life. He says, "He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." *John* vi. 58. Let us say then as the disciples said, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." *John* vi. 34.

CCLXXXVI.

JESUS WALKING ON THE SEA.



WHEN the people had finished eating, Jesus told His disciples to get into a ship, and go to the other side of the sea of Galilee.

Then He sent away the multitude, and went up to a mountain alone, and there He spent many hours in prayer. Jesus was weak and tired; but he was never too tired to pray, nor too tired to do good to any who came to Him.

But where were the disciples all this time? They were in the ship in the midst of the sea. And they were in great danger; for the wind was high, and the sea was rough, and the ship was tossed with the waves; and Jesus was not there to comfort

and take care of them. But He had not forgotten His disciples; He had seen them all the time; and now, when they were in sorrow and danger, He came to help them. How did He come? Did He get into a ship, and sail to them across the sea? No; Jesus did not want a ship to take Him across; he came to them "walking on the sea." But did He not sink into the water? No; He had made the sea, and He could do as He pleased with it. The waves did not bend under His feet; He walked on firmly, and came near to the ship. The disciples saw Him coming, but they did not know Him at first; and they thought an evil spirit was coming

to hurt them, and cried out for fear. Then Jesus spoke gently to them, and said, "It is I; be not afraid." The disciples knew His voice directly; and how glad they were to have Him with them again! Peter was so glad, that he said, "Lord, if it be Thou, let me come to Thee on the water." Jesus answered, "Come;" so Peter came down out of the ship, and walked upon the water to go to Jesus. But could Peter walk upon the water as Jesus did? Not by his own power; but he looked in faith to Jesus, and Jesus enabled him to walk on safely. But the wind was very high; and the waves were very rough; and when Peter saw this, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried "Lord, save me." While Peter kept his eyes on Jesus, he was safe; but when he looked down upon the water, he began

to sink; because then he did not trust himself to Jesus' care. But Jesus did not let Peter sink; He put out His hand and caught him, saying, "O thou of little faith, why didst Thou doubt?" Then he brought Peter safely into the ship; and directly they were come into the ship, the wind ceased; and the disciples worshipped Jesus, and said, "Truly Thou art the Son of God."

Jesus can take care of His people now, as He took care of His disciples on the stormy sea. He is with them in all their troubles and sorrows, and they may trust everything to Him, and never feel afraid. But when they are in difficulty, they must look in faith to Him for help and strength, not to themselves, nor to anything on earth, remembering that Jesus says, "Without me, ye can do nothing." *John xv. 5.*

OCLXXXVII.

THE GENTILE WOMAN.



JESUS now went to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. One day, as He was walking with His disciples, a Greek woman who lived near, came out, and cried to Jesus, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord! My daughter is sore vexed with a devil." But Jesus made her no answer. Then the disciples said, "Send this woman away; for she crieth after us." But Jesus answered,

"I am sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." Yet still the woman would not go away. She came nearer to Jesus, and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me." Then Jesus said to her, "It is not right to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs."

What did this mean? The Jews, God's chosen people, were the "children;" and the Gentiles were "the dogs;"—Jesus only meant to

say, that He must attend to the people of Israel, before He attended to the Gentiles.

The woman was not angry with what Jesus said. She was willing that He should love the Jews best, and attend to their wants first; but she knew that He would save Gentiles as well as Jews, because He was so powerful, and so merciful; so she answered, "Yes, Lord, but the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." How humble this woman was, and what faith she had in Jesus! And did Jesus attend to her at last? Yes; all this time He had been trying her faith; He wished to see if she really trusted in Him; He never meant to be unkind to her, and to send her away in anger. And now He said, "O woman, great is thy faith; go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter." So the woman went home, and found her daughter

well, and lying quietly upon the bed.

And now what are we to learn from this story? It should teach us a lesson of faith and patience. When we come to Jesus, we must come, as this woman did, believing that He is able and willing to save us. We must tell Him all our wants, and all our sorrows, and say, "Lord! help me." But perhaps he may not answer our prayers directly. Then we must pray to Him again; and we know that He will answer us at last, because He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you." *Matthew* vii. 7. When the right time comes, He will give us all that is really good for us; and we must learn to wait in faith and patience for an answer to our prayers. "Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." *Hab.* ii. 3.

CCLXXXVIII.

THE DEAF AND DUMB MAN.

JESUS left Tyre and Sidon, and went again to the sea of Galilee. A great many sick people were brought to Him there; and among them was a man who was deaf, and could not speak. Perhaps this poor man had been born deaf, or had become so when very young; and perhaps he had never been taught to do anything, or to know anything. Then he

was in a sad state indeed! For the deaf and dumb cannot learn as others can; they must be taught very carefully, and very patiently, or they will know nothing;—nothing of God, nor of Christ, nor of the Bible. How thankful those deaf and dumb people ought to be, who have been taught to know and understand these things!

When the poor man was brought to Jesus, Jesus took him r

the multitude; and put His fingers into his ears, and spit, and touched his tongue. Then He looked up to Heaven, and sighed, and said to the man, "Be opened." Why did Jesus sigh? Perhaps he sighed to think what sorrow and trouble sin had brought into the world. There would have been no deaf and dumb, no lame and blind, if there had been no sin.

But what happened when Jesus said, "Be opened?" The ears of the man were opened, and his tongue was loosed, and He spoke plain. The people wondered very much at the miracle which Jesus had done, and cried, saying, "he hath done all things well; He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak."

There are many deaf and dumb people in the world now; and some of them have friends who try to bring them to Jesus, as the friends of this poor man did. They do not bring them to have their bodies cured, but to have their souls cured. The deaf and dumb have a much worse disease than deafness;—the disease of sin; and they cannot know of themselves how this dis-

ease may be cured. But their kind friends teach them how. They try to make them understand what the Lord Jesus Christ has done to save sinners; and teach them to pray to Him in faith, and ask to have their sins washed away in His blood, and their hearts made new by the Holy Spirit, that they may be taken to be with Him in Heaven when they die. We cannot hope that their ears will be opened in this world; for Jesus is not now walking upon the earth, and working miracles; but they may *read* of Him though they cannot *hear* of Him; and they may learn to *praise* Him in their *hearts*, though they cannot *speak* of Him with their *tongues*. But they will not always be deaf and dumb. If they learn really to believe in Jesus, and to love Him here, they will go, when they die, to that world where "the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, and the tongue of the dumb sing." *Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6.* And then they will know why God made them deaf and dumb upon earth; and feel that He made them so in wisdom and in love, and that "He hath done all things well."

CCLXXXIX.

PETER'S CONFESSION.



JESUS came into Cesarea Philippi. As He was one day talking with His disciples, He said, "Whom do men say that I am?"

The disciples answered, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; and others Jeremiah, or one of the Prophets." Then Jesus said, "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus looked upon Peter, and said, "Blessed art thou, Simon, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in Heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Jesus meant that none could love Him so sincerely, and confess Him so boldly, as Peter did, without God's grace. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." 1 Cor. xii. 3.

Why did Jesus give Simon the name of Peter? It was because he was so decided in the confession of his faith in Christ as the Messiah. "I say unto thee, that thou art Peter;" i.e. "thou art by name *Rock*,"—thy name *means* rock, which is a symbol of strength and firmness. "And upon this rock I will build my Church." The name, thus given to this Apostle, corresponded to his character and work. The words of Jesus

seem applicable to Peter, not only on account of his earnest *confession*, but as he was the *first* apostle called to the ministry. He too was the *first* who preached the Gospel to the Jews, and the *first* to preach it to the Gentiles. Christ used his ministry in laying the foundation of the Church among both Jews and Gentiles. Was Peter exalted in consequence? No, nor did he claim any official authority over the other apostles.

Jesus said something more to Peter. He said, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in Heaven. What did this mean? In the Bible a *key* is the symbol of power and authority. God said to *Isaiah*, xxii. 22, "The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open and none shall shut." In giving to Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," Christ clothed him with authority to open the door of this kingdom, i.e. the Christian Church, to the people of all nations. *Acts* ii. 14–36. *Acts* x. 34–48.

This same Gospel is preached to us now. We should pray that we may be enabled to receive it into our hearts; and to love the Lord

Jesus Christ as sincerely, and confess Him as boldly, as the Apostle Peter did; "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." *Rom. x. 10.*

CCXC.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.



LITTLE time after this, Jesus called Peter, and James, and John, and took them to the top of a mountain, to pray. And as Jesus prayed, He was transfigured,—that is, He appeared changed, and did not look as He did before. His face shone like the sun, and His raiment was bright, like the light, so bright that the disciples could hardly look upon it. Peter, and James, and John, were heavy with sleep; for the sight was too much for them to bear; but when they were awake, they saw the glory of Jesus, and He gave them power to look upon it. And they then saw two men talking with Jesus. Who were they? Not men like themselves in poor perishing bodies, but glorified saints from Heaven. They were Moses and Elijah. These two holy men had left this world long before. Moses died upon Mount Pisgah, and the Lord Himself buried him. And Elijah was taken up to Heaven in a chariot of fire, without dying, many years after the death of Moses. Moses and Elijah had long been with God in Heaven; and now they were allowed to come down, for a little time, to earth again, to see Jesus in His glory, and

to talk with Him upon the mount. What did they talk about? Of the death which Jesus would soon die at Jerusalem. Moses and Elijah had believed in Jesus as their Saviour, when they were on earth. They knew that He was to come down from Heaven, and die for sinners; and when they had offered the sacrifices, they had looked to Him in faith, as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." And now the time was nearly come when that Lamb should really be offered up; and Moses and Elijah rejoiced that it was; for they knew that the sacrifice of Jesus alone could save sinners, and that it was needful for Him first to suffer, and then to enter into His glory.

When the disciples looked up, and saw Jesus, and Moses, and Elijah, and heard the blessed things they said, Peter cried, "Lord, it is good to be here; and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah," not knowing what he said. While he spoke, a bright cloud came and overshadowed them; and the disciples were afraid as they entered into the cloud. But they had no need to fear, for Jesus was still there

to keep and comfort them. Then they heard a voice speaking out of the cloud, and it said, "This is my beloved Son; hear him." It was the Father's voice; and He said this to teach the disciples how great Jesus was; much, much greater even than Moses and Elijah.

When Peter, and James, and John, heard the voice of God, they were again very much afraid; and fell down upon their faces on the ground. But Jesus came and touched them; and said, "Arise, and be not afraid." Then the disciples arose, and looked up. Moses and Elijah were gone; gone again to their happy home in Heaven. Jesus only was there; and He was not now shining in glory, but was as He had been before the transfig-

uration. Then He called His disciples, and led them down from the mount.

Peter had felt happy on the mountain, when he saw Jesus, and Moses, and Elijah, in glory; and he wished to stay there always, and not to go back into the world again. But Jesus did not let Peter have his wish. Jesus was going to suffer Himself, before He went to glory; and His disciples must suffer too, before they could meet their Master in Heaven. But Peter, and James, and John, have now long been with Jesus; they are rejoicing with Moses and Elijah, and many more of God's faithful servants above. And they will be there for ever, and never again come back to a world of sorrow and sin.

CCXCL

AN EVIL SPIRIT CAST OUT.



WHEN Jesus came down from the mountain, He saw a great many people standing round the disciples, talking to them. As soon as the people saw Jesus, they all ran to Him; and one of them said, "Lord, I have brought my son to thee to be cured; for he has a deaf and dumb spirit; and I asked thy disciples to cast it out, but they could not." Then Jesus said, "Bring the child to me." So the father went to fetch him. But as the poor boy was coming to Je-

sus, the evil spirit tore him, and threw him upon the ground. Then Jesus asked, "How long has he been troubled in this way?" The father answered, "From a little child; and sometimes the evil spirit throws him into the water, and sometimes into the fire, and tries to destroy him; but if thou canst do anything, have mercy on us, and help us."

The father's faith was very weak; he did not feel quite sure that Jesus was able to save his child. But Jesus said, "Canst thou believe?"

All things are possible to those that believe." Then the father cried out, and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Jesus was willing to heal the child; he only wanted the father to believe; and now He spoke to the evil spirit, and said, "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee to come out of him, and enter no more into him." And the spirit obeyed the command, and came out; but the child was left so weak and ill, that the people said, "He is dead." Then Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up, and he arose.

We may hope that the father taught this child to love and serve Jesus; that he brought him up "in

the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This is what all really good parents and teachers try to do with their children. They wish to bring them to Jesus, as this father brought his poor boy. All children have, by nature, an evil spirit within them. Satan fills them with angry passions and sinful tempers, and tries to destroy their souls, as this deaf and dumb spirit tried to destroy the body of the poor boy. And only Jesus can cast out the evil spirit. Only His grace can take away the wicked passions of children, and make them gentle, and humble, and obedient; but Jesus is willing to give this grace to all who ask for it.

CCXCII

THE TRIBUTE-MONEY.



THE Jews were required to pay a sum of money for the service of the temple in Jerusalem. It was quite right that they should do so, in obedience to the law, and for the support of public worship in the land; for the Bible tells us to "render to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." *Romans* xiii. 7.

The men who collected the tribute-money came to Peter, and said, "Does not your master pay tribute?" Peter answered, "Yes;" for he knew that Jesus always

obeyed the laws himself, and taught the people to do so too. And before Peter said anything to Jesus about the tribute-money, Jesus himself told him that it was right that the tax should be paid. But how could they find the money? Jesus was poor, and Peter was poor, and the disciples were poor;—what could they do? Jesus told Peter to go to the sea, and cast in a hook, and take up the first fish that came. Then Peter was to open the fish's mouth; and Jesus told him, that he would there find a piece of money, which he must take and give to the people, as tribute-money for himself and Jesus. So Peter

went to the sea, and did what he was commanded, and found all as Jesus had said. We cannot tell how the money came into the fish's mouth; but what wonderful power Jesus showed in bringing the right fish to Peter's hook, just at the right time!

We may learn a lesson from this story. When we have a duty to do, we ought always to do it directly. If we owe a debt, we should always pay it as soon as possible. Perhaps it may be very hard to do this; we cannot tell how to raise

the money, and we may be in trouble and difficulty about it. But if people determine to do what is right, and ask help from God, He can make all easy. He may not work a miracle, as Jesus did when He brought the fish with the money to Peter's hook; but He can find a way to help His people; and He will help them, if they seek His direction, and enable them to do what is right, and to be honest "not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." *2 Cor. viii. 21.*

CCXCIII.

A LESSON OF HUMILITY.

THE disciples, all but one, really loved Jesus; but they were weak and sinful like ourselves, and therefore, they often did and said what was very foolish and very wrong. One day, they quarrelled among themselves who should be the greatest. They came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, who shall be chief in the kingdom of Heaven?" This showed great pride in the disciples; so Jesus kindly reproved them, and told them how sinful it is to be proud. He called a little child, and took it up in His arms, and said, "Except you become like little children, you cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever shall humble himself like this little child, he shall be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven."

What did Jesus mean by this? Why were the disciples to be like little children? Are not little children sinful, and full of evil tempers and bad passions? Yes; and the disciples were not to be like them in these things. But there are other things in which we ought all to try to be like little children. Little children feel that they are ignorant and know nothing, and are willing to be taught. So the disciples of Jesus should be. They must not think of themselves "more highly than they ought to think;" they must not be "wise in their own conceits." The Bible says, "Be clothed with humility." *1 Peter v. 5.*

Little children feel their own weakness, and run to their kind parents to take care of them, and help them in all their troubles and

dangers. God's people ought to feel that they are weak too; unable to save themselves, or to resist their enemies—the enemies of their souls. They should look to God for help, and say, as David did, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." *Psalm* cxix. 117.

Little children are gentle and affectionate. They love their parents more than all the world, and do not like to go away from them. So God's children ought to love their

heavenly Father, and say to Him, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth." *Jer.* iii. 4. "Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." *Psalm* lxxiii. 25. Only those who are thus humble and gentle, and who love God with all their hearts as their heavenly Father now, will be taken to that world above where all is love and joy for ever.

CCXCIV.

THE UNKIND SERVANT.



PETER once came to Jesus, and asked, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Seven times?"

Jesus answered, "Not seven times only, but seventy times seven." Jesus meant that Peter must be *always* ready to forgive his brother.

Then Jesus told the disciples this parable. A certain king had a servant who owed him a very large sum of money,—ten thousand talents. This servant was not able to pay; so his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, that payment might be made. When the poor man heard this, he was in very great trouble; and he fell down before the king, and cried, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." Then the king was moved with pity, for he was a very kind master, and he

forgave his servant the debt, and let him go. But not long after, this servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants who owed him a little money, only one hundred pence; and he ran to him, and took him by the throat, and said, "Pay me what thou owest." Then the fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and cried, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." But the hard-hearted man would not attend to what his fellow-servant said, but took him and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. When the other servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told all to their master. Then the king was angry, and he called the unkind servant, and said to him, "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; oughtest not thou to have had pity on thy fellow-

servant, as I had pity on thee?" And then the king commanded that the cruel servant should be thrown into prison, till he should pay his own debt.

This story should teach us all the duty of forgiveness. God is our master, and we have all made Him angry many times; we sin against Him every day, yet He spares us still. He has even promised to pardon us, and to give us eternal life in Heaven, if we come to Him in faith.

Then, "if God so loves us, we ought also to love one another." 1 *John* iv. 11. How can we come to Him, and say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," when our hearts are full of angry and unkind feelings? If we wish God to pardon us, we must be willing to pardon our fellow-creatures. Jesus says, "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." *Luke* vi. 37.

CCXCV.

THE MAN WHO WAS BORN BLIND.



ONE day, as Jesus was walking, he met a beggar who had been born blind. Jesus loved to do good to all, and he was ready to cure this poor man. He opened his eyes in a very wonderful way. He spit on the ground, and made clay, and anointed the eyes of the blind man, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." Then the man went to the pool, and washed, and came seeing. All the people wondered very much when they found that the beggar could see. Some asked, "Is that the man who was blind, and used to sit begging by the road-side?" Others said, "He is like him; but he cannot be the same man." So at last they called the poor man, and asked him; and he said, "Yes, I am he." Then they asked again, "How were thine eyes opened?" and he answered,

"A man named Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and told me to go and wash in the pool of Siloam; so I went and washed, and received sight." The people wanted to know where Jesus was, but the man could not tell them. Then they wondered still more, and they brought the man to the Pharisees. All this was on the Sabbath-day.

When the Pharisees heard the story, they would not believe it. They said, "It cannot be; we never heard of anything like this before. Who ever opened the eyes of a person born blind?" The Pharisees did not believe in the power of Jesus, because they did not believe Him to be the Son of God. And the man himself knew very little about Jesus; he thought He must be a prophet, or some very wonderful person; but he had never heard

that Jesus was the Messiah. So the Pharisees called the man's parents, and said to them, "Tell us what you know about this man. Is he your son? Was he really born blind? How is it he can now see?" The parents answered, "We know he is our son; and we are quite sure he was born blind; but who opened his eyes we know not. Ask him; he is old enough to speak for himself." The parents began to feel afraid; for they knew that the Pharisees would be very angry if they confessed Jesus to be the Son of God.

Then the Pharisees called the man who had been blind, and said, "We know this man who opened thine eyes; he is a sinner." He answered, "I cannot tell if he is a sinner or not; but one thing I know; once I was blind, and now I see." Then the Pharisees asked again, "Tell us, what did He do to thee? How opened He thine eyes?" The man answered, "I have told you before; why do you ask again? Will you be His disciples?" Then the Pharisees began to be very angry, and said, "No, thou art His disciple; we are not; we know nothing about Him, and will not believe in Him." The poor man was not like these proud Pharisees; he felt thankful to Jesus, and began to believe that He was really the Son of God; so he boldly answered, "How is it you know nothing of this man who has opened my eyes? Did you ever before hear of any one opening the eyes of a person born blind? If this man had not come from God, He could do

nothing." Then the Pharisees grew still more angry, and they took the poor man, and cast him out.

But Jesus, who had been so kind before to that poor man, did not forsake him now. He found him out, and spoke to him, and asked, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" The man answered, "Lord, who is He, that I might believe on Him?" Jesus said, "Thou hast seen Him, and it is He who talketh with thee now." When the man heard this, he fell down at Jesus' feet, and worshipped Him, and said, "Lord, I believe." Jesus had before opened his bodily eyes; now He opened the eyes of his heart, and enabled him to believe, that he might be eternally saved.

It is very sad to be born blind; and never to see the bright sunshine, and the blue sky, and the beautiful trees and flowers. If God has given us eye-sight, how thankful we should be for it! But there is another, and a worse blindness,—a blindness of the soul, of the heart, of the understanding; and we are, every one of us, thus spiritually blind. And if sight is not given to our souls before "our feet stumble upon the dark mountains," our light will be "turned into the shadow of death." This is a very solemn thought. Let us pray God "to open our eyes, and to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that we may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus." *Acts xxvi. 18.*

CCXCVI.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.



ESUS sometimes called Himself a shepherd, and His disciples He called His sheep. How is Jesus like a shepherd?

A good shepherd takes care of his flock. If one sheep strays from the fold, he goes after it, and seeks it; and when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, and brings it home rejoicing. So "all we, like sheep, have gone astray;" *Isaiah* liii. 6; and Jesus Christ, the good shepherd, came down from Heaven to seek and save us. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." *Matt.* xviii. 11.

A good shepherd risks his own life to save his flock. When young David kept his father's sheep in Bethlehem, there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock; and David went after those savage beasts, and killed them and delivered the lamb out of their mouth, and brought it back safely to the fold. And so Jesus Christ, of whom the shepherd David was a type, was willing even to lay down His life for His sheep. He died to save His people; to deliver them from the power of that "roaring lion who walketh about seeking whom he may devour." 1 *Peter* v. 8.

A good shepherd leads his sheep to fresh grass, and streams of clear water. So Jesus feeds His people

with spiritual food, and gives them "living water" to drink. David says, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters." *Psalms* xxiii. 1, 2.

A good shepherd takes great care of the little lambs in his flock; he is very kind and gentle to them. So Jesus loves his lambs,—those little children who love Him. He says, "Suffer little children to come unto me." *Matt.* xix. 14. He "shall gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom." *Isaiah* xl. 11.

A good shepherd, in eastern countries like Judea, knows every sheep and lamb in his flock; and calls them by their names, and they know him, and follow him. And so the Lord Jesus Christ knows all His people;—every little child among them; and He calls them in His word, and by His Spirit; and they love to obey Him, and to follow Him. And where will He lead His people? He will lead them through this wilderness world, and bring them safely to their fold in Heaven. Let us pray that we may be among the sheep and lambs of Christ, to whom He says, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." *Luke* xii. 32.

CCXCVII

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.



UNBELIEVING people often came to Jesus to try to perplex him with hard questions. One day a lawyer stood up, and said, "Master, what shall I do to have eternal life?" Jesus answered, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" This man knew the law very well, so he said directly, "'Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.'" Jesus answered, "Thou hast said right; do this, and thou shalt live."

But this man, proud and self-righteous, asked Jesus again, "And who is my neighbor?" Then Jesus told him this parable.

A certain man went from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who robbed him, and wounded him, and went away, leaving him half dead. As the poor wounded man lay in the road, covered with blood, a priest came by. The priest knew that it was right to be kind to those in trouble; yet, instead of showing kindness to the poor man, he passed by on the other side. Soon after, a Levite came to the place; and he looked at the wounded man, but did not stay to help him. Perhaps he was afraid that the robbers might come and attack him, so he passed by on the other side. After these two selfish hard-hearted men were gone, a Samaritan, who was taking a

journey, came near the place where the wounded man was still lying. The Samaritan did not know the man; they were not friends nor neighbors; for the Jews, you remember, "had no dealings with the Samaritans." But this Samaritan was so kind, that, when he saw the poor man lying half dead, he ran to him directly, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and then he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Did he stay to nurse him? No; perhaps his family were waiting for him at home, and so he might have been unable to stay; but before he went away, he called the innkeeper, and gave him two pence, and said, "Take care of this poor man; let him have all he wants; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee."

When Jesus had finished this parable, he turned to the lawyer, and said, "Which of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor to the man who fell among the thieves?" The lawyer answered, "He who showed mercy to him." Then said Jesus, "Go, and do thou likewise." Jesus meant to teach the lawyer that all men are our neighbors; not only our friends and relations, but *all*, even our enemies, or people we have never seen.

This parable may teach us a lesson, as well as the lawyer. It

should teach us to be kind to our neighbors; to be always ready to help them, and to do them good. We may be kind in little things, as well as in great things. All may do something for those in sorrow; and all should try to do what they can. This is the command of Jesus: "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted." *Eph. iv. 32.*

CCXCVIII

THE CRIPPLE HEALED.

JESUS went into one of the synagogues to teach on the Sabbath day. Among those who heard him, was a poor woman who had been a cripple for eighteen years; she was bowed together with disease, so that she could not lift up herself.

This poor woman went to the synagogue for the good of her soul, but it pleased God to give her more blessings than, perhaps, she expected; for she was not only comforted in her heart that day, but healed in her body too. When Jesus saw her, he had compassion on her, and called her to him, and said, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity:" and then he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

The ruler of the synagogue was a wicked and unbelieving man, and instead of rejoicing that this poor woman was healed, he began to find fault, because Jesus had cured her on the Sabbath day. He said, "There are six days in which men ought to work; come and be healed in them, and not on the Sabbath day." But Jesus reproved this

hard-hearted man, and said, "Doth not each of you, on the Sabbath, loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead it away to watering? And ought not this woman, whom Satan hath bound these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" When Jesus said this, all his enemies were ashamed, and the people rejoiced for all the glorious things which were done by him.

When we go to the house of God, like this poor woman, on the Sabbath day, Jesus is not there *bodily*, to speak to the people, and heal those who are sick and diseased among them. But we may be quite sure that he is there *spiritually*, because he himself has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

And Jesus has a blessing, too, to bestow upon all those who seek for it aright. He can loose us from a worse infirmity than that from which the poor cripple suffered. Satan has bound us in much stronger bonds than those in which he had bound her,—in the bonds of sin. And only Jesus himself can

deliver us from these bonds. Now those who really wish to be set free from Satan's power, must seek to be so in God's appointed way. They must read His word, they must pray to Him, they must confess their infirmity, and beseech Him to deliver them from it. Then, like the poor cripple, they will find mercy, and, as she did, they will glorify God.

CCXCIX.

THE GREAT SUPPER.



WHEN Jesus was dining one day in a Pharisee's house, he told the people this parable. A certain man made a great feast, and invited many. And he sent his servant at supper-time to say to those who were invited, "Come, for all things are now ready."

Were they glad to come? No; they were very unwilling; they all began to make excuses. One said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it; I pray thee have me excused." Another said, "I have bought some oxen, and I am going to try them: I pray thee have me excused." And another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." So the servant went back, and told his lord. Then the master was angry; and he said to his servant, "Go out quickly into the streets of the city, and bring in the poor, and the lame, and the halt, and the blind." The servant did as he was told, but still there was room. Then the master said, "Go farther off, into the high-ways and hedges, and make them come in, that my house may be filled; for I say unto you, that none

of those men who were first invited, shall taste of my supper."

God is the master in this parable. The good things which He has promised to those who love Him, are often called in the Bible "a feast;"—"the marriage-supper of the Lamb" in Heaven. God calls people to come to this feast. He calls them in His word, and by His ministers. At first He invited the Jews. The gospel was preached to them; and when they would not attend to it, He sent the message to others far off from Jerusalem, to Gentiles living in distant lands; and He is inviting us now every day.

Do we all attend to His message? No; many people make excuses, like the men in the parable. Some say they are too busy to attend to holy things; they have no time for them. Others say they are too young: they are so pleased with the foolish things of this world, that they do not want to attend to heavenly things. How sad it is to think of the end of these people, if they will not attend to God's invitation now! He will not invite them always. He will not invite

them at the day of judgment. He will say then, "None of those men who were invited, and would not come, shall taste of my supper."

But some are willing to attend. The humble and the poor in spirit, and those who are sorry for sin, and feel that nothing in this world can make them really happy, are very willing, and very thankful to hear God's message to them—"he that

hath no money, let him come and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." *Is. lv. 1.* Let us obey the call, for "all things are now ready," and "yet there is room." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, come; and whosoever will, let him come." *Rev. xxii. 17.*

CCC.

MERCY FOR THE PENITENT:



GREAT many sinners came to hear Jesus preach. Did He not send away those wicked people? No;

He was willing to receive all; He sent none away. He loved penitent sinners better than self-righteous Pharisees; and he told the people some parables to show them His love to sinners. He said, "If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost? And when he has found it he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. Then he goes home, and calls his friends together, and says, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.' So there is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth. And if a woman have ten pieces of silver, and lose one piece, does she not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek carefully till she find it? And when

she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, and says to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece I had lost.' So there is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

We were all lost, like the stray sheep, and like the piece of money; and Jesus Christ came down from Heaven to seek and to save us. What love and kindness He must have for poor perishing sinners! And whenever any one of these poor sinners repents and turns to God, then there is joy in Heaven; Christ Himself rejoices, and the holy angels rejoice too, and shout for joy. We should ask ourselves, "Have we ever repented and turned to God? And have the holy angels in Heaven ever rejoiced over us?"

Then Jesus told the people another parable. A certain man had two sons; and the younger said to his father, "Father, give me my

portion of thy possessions." So the father divided all he had between his two sons. A few days after, the younger son gathered all his money together, and went away from his father and his home, and took a journey into a far country; and there he wasted his riches in folly and wickedness. When he had spent all there arose a great famine in that land, and he began to be in want. So he went and joined himself to a citizen in that country; and this citizen sent him into the fields, to feed swine. The foolish ungrateful son had now no kind father to take care of him; no home to rest in; no friend to love and comfort him. He was so hungry that he was glad to eat the food which the swine eat, for no man gave unto him. And then he began to think how wicked and foolish he had been, and how ungrateful to his kind father. He said to himself, "My father's servants have plenty of food to eat; there is enough and to spare at home; and here I am perishing with hunger. I will arise and go to my father. I will confess my wickedness, and ask him to forgive me. I will say, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thine hired servants." So he arose and went to his father.

But was his father willing to receive him? Yes, that kind father had long been waiting and looking for him; for he loved him still; and when he saw his poor son coming towards him, humble and full of sorrow, he did not send him away in anger; but, while he was yet afar off, the father ran to meet him, and fell

on his neck, and kissed him. Then the son began to confess his wickedness. He said, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee; I am not worthy to be called thy son." But the father hardly waited to hear his son's confession; he forgave him all directly, and called the servants, and said, "Bring here the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand; and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." So they began to be merry.

Where was the elder son? He was in the field when his brother came home; and, as he returned to the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing within. So he called one of the servants, and asked, "Why is this?" The servant said, "Thy brother is come; and thy father has made a great feast, because he has returned safe and well." Was not the elder brother very glad to hear this? No; this elder brother was selfish, and jealous, and unfeeling, and instead of running to welcome his poor brother, he turned away, and would not go into the house. At last his father came, and begged him to go in. Then the jealous son said, "I have lived many years with thee, and I never disobeyed thy commands; yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, who has been so disobedient and rebellious, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf." Then the father spoke gently to his unfeeling son, and tried to make

him kind and affectionate to his poor brother. He said, "Yes, my son; thou art always with me, and all I have is thine. But it is right that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

What does this parable mean? The father is God; He is a kind father to us, but we have all been ungrateful children to Him; as rebellious and disobedient as the younger son in the parable. We have gone away from our father. We have loved sin better than holiness, and wasted much of our time in folly and sin. This is what all people do, till God's Holy Spirit changes their hearts. Sometimes trouble, or sorrow, or sickness is sent to make sinners feel and think how sad sin is; and then they find that nothing in this world can comfort them. They are like the poor son in the distant land, when no

man gave unto him. But if their trouble leads them to repentance; if they go to God, and say, "Father, we have sinned;" then God is willing to hear, and to bless and comfort them; as willing as the father was to pity his poor son. God says to all penitent sinners, "Return, ye backsliding children. I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from them." *Hos.* xiv. 4.

How glad we ought to be when any poor sinners are brought back to God! We should not be like the jealous brother in the parable; nor like the proud Pharisees, who were angry when they saw sinners coming to Jesus; nor like the Jews, who wished Heaven for themselves only, and not for the Gentiles. These people all showed a very bad spirit. Christ rejoices when sinners come to Him; the angels in Heaven rejoice; and God's people on earth should rejoice and be glad too.

CCCL

THE STEWARD.



JESUS told His disciples this parable. A certain rich man had a steward who was accused of wasting his master's goods.

So the master called him, and said, "What is this that I hear? Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou shalt be no longer steward."

Then this wicked servant began to think what he should do, when sent away from his master's house. He was too idle to work, and too proud to beg. Idleness and pride are both very great sins, and they led this steward to something still worse,—to cheating and dishonesty. He called all his master's debtors, and said to one, "How much owest thou to my lord?" The man answered, "I owe him a hundred measures of oil." The steward said, "Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty." Then he went to another debtor, and asked, "How much owest thou?" He answered, "A hundred measures of wheat." The steward said, "Take thy bill and write eighty."

But why did the wicked steward do all this? Because he thought it would please the debtors, and make them friendly to him; and then, when he was sent away from his master's house, they might, perhaps, receive him into theirs. The master soon heard what the steward had done, and commended him because he had done wisely. But it was not

for holy wisdom that the master commended him; the steward had none of this. No; it was for the worldly wisdom which he showed in taking care of himself. Wicked people have often a great deal of this worldly wisdom—more than the people of God have.

We are all stewards. God is our master; He has entrusted many things to our care, and He will be angry if we waste or misuse them. What has He given us? To some He has given riches and possessions; to all He has given time, and life, and some of the good things of this world. He will call us to account for these at last; and all who have wasted them will then be punished, as wicked and unfaithful servants.

When Jesus had ended this parable, He said to His disciples, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." He had just been speaking of the *worldly* wisdom of the wicked steward, and He told His disciples how they must show their *heavenly* wisdom. The steward tried to gain a home for himself in *this world*; they must try to gain an everlasting home for themselves in *Heaven*.

The riches and good things of this world are "the mammon of unrighteousness." They are vain and worthless in themselves; and they are very hurtful to those who

trust in them and love them, for they then lead the heart away from God. How then are we to make friends of them? By using all we have to the glory of God. This is the right way of spending riches, and whatever else God gives us. These things must soon fail; and we must fail too, when we come to die. But if we live in the faith, and fear, and love of God, and use all we have in His service, then when earthly things fail, we shall be received into an everlasting habitation; into Heaven, to dwell there for ever and ever.

CCCII.

THE RICH MAN AND THE BEGGAR.

WHEN Jesus told the people another parable. There was a certain rich man who lived in a great house, and had many servants, and was clothed in purple and fine linen, and had plenty to eat and to drink every day. At the gate of this rich man's house lay a beggar, named Lazarus. This poor man had no home to live in, no bed to lie on; and all the food he had to eat, was the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. And Lazarus was sick as well as poor. He was covered with sores, and no one tried to heal him, and make him well; only the "dogs came and licked his sores."

Was not the poor beggar very miserable? No; he had something to make him happy. He had a friend above; for Lazarus loved God; and, as he lay at the rich man's gate, in hunger and pain, he used to think of his home in Heaven, and of those good things which God has promised to those who love Him. This comforted the poor beggar, and made him happy; hap-

pier than the rich man was, for he knew nothing of God; he cared only for the things of this world.

At last, the beggar died; and then the holy angels were sent to carry his happy soul to Heaven;—Lazarus was taken safe to that world where all tears are wiped away. Soon after the rich man died too. Great mourning was made for him; and when he was buried, many friends followed his dead body to the tomb. But where was his soul? No angels were sent to carry it to Heaven; for the rich man died as he had lived,—ignorant of God—without repentance, and without pardon. How very, very sad his end was! "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." Then he looked towards Heaven, and there he saw Lazarus, peaceful and happy, in Abraham's bosom. And he cried, and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." But Abraham answered,

"Son, remember that thou in thy life-time hadst thy good things—riches, and honors, and pleasures; thou didst not seek for the good things of another world. And Lazarus had evil things; pain, and poverty, and trouble; but he did seek for happiness and possessions in Heaven; and, therefore, now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And then, see what a great gulf there is between us and you. We cannot pass to you, and you cannot pass to us. We must stay where we are, and you where you are, for ever." But the rich man said, "I pray thee, then, send Lazarus to my father's house; for I have five brethren; let him go and warn them not to come to this place of torment." Abraham answered, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." Then the rich man said, "Nay, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they would repent." But Abraham answered again, "If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, they will not repent even if one went to them from the dead."

The parable ends here. Abraham said no more; the rich man's prayers could not be heard either for himself or his brethren. Prayers are not heard in the world of departed spirits. This parable should teach us to seek for "good things" in Heaven, not on earth. If we have our treasure above, we need not care how poor and how afflicted we may be in this world. Life and all its troubles will soon be over, and then the angels will carry us to that happy place where we shall receive "a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

But how can we learn the way to Heaven? God Himself has given us His holy word to teach us. We have "Moses and the prophets;" we have the Old Testament, and the New Testament too, to show us the way to Heaven; and we have God's faithful ministers to explain them to us, and His Holy Spirit to teach us if we ask for it. Let us "search the Scriptures;" and let us pray that they may make us "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. iii. 15.

CCCIII.

THE TEN LEPERS.



AS Jesus was going to Jerusalem, He passed through a village where ten lepers met Him. They stood afar off, and cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Then Jesus said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." So they went away; and as they went, they were cleansed. One of these lepers, a Samaritan, when he saw what Jesus had done, turned back, and with a loud voice praised and glorified God. But the others went on, and took no notice. Then Jesus said, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Only this stranger has returned to give thanks unto God."

How very ungrateful these nine lepers were! Let us try not to be *like them*. Ingratitude is a great sin, and makes God angry. It is *wrong* not to thank an earthly friend who has been kind to us;

but still more wrong not to thank God for His mercies. He has done many things for us. He has kept us in safety all our lives; He has healed us when we have been sick; He gives us food to eat, and clothes to put on, every day we live. And more than all this;—He has given His Son to die for us;—to cure us of the disease of sin, a disease much worse than the leprosy was. What can we do for these blessings? How can we show our gratitude to God? David tells us. He said, "I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord." *Psalm cxvi. 17.* We should give ourselves up to that God who has done so much for us. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."—*1 Cor. vi. 20.*

CCCIV.

PARABLES ON PRAYER,

JESUS often spoke to the people on the duty of prayer. One day He told them this parable. There was in a city a judge. He was wicked and cruel; he cared neither for God nor man. A poor widow lived also in that city; she was in great trouble, and came to the judge for help. But the unkind judge cared nothing for the poor widow's sorrow; he sent her away; and would not help her. But after a little time, she came again. Then the judge said to himself, "I do not fear God, and I do not care for my neighbors. The sorrow of this woman is nothing to me. But yet I will attend to her, and help her, for I fear, if I do not, she will give me great trouble by coming so often." So the judge did what the poor widow wanted, and sent her away.

And what are we to learn from this story? God is a judge; but He is not like the judge in the parable. No; God is kind and merciful. This ought to encourage us to come to Him, and tell Him all our wants. Even the cruel judge at last gave the widow what she asked; much more God will give us what we pray for, if we pray aright; and He will give it in love, not in anger and unkindness. And the parable teaches us too, to persevere in prayer. The widow was not soon tired of coming to the judge: she came again and again. And we must pray to God

again and again. Perhaps he may not answer our prayers at first; but still we must not be weary; God's command is, "Pray without ceasing." 1 *Thes.* v. 17.

Then Jesus told the people another parable, to teach them how they must pray. He said, Two men went up to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee; the other was a publican. The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus: "Lord, I thank thee that I am not like other men; I am not even like this publican. I am a good and honest man; I fast twice a week, and I am very kind to the poor." The Pharisee felt much pleased with himself and his own goodness; but how did the publican feel, how did *he* pray? He stood afar off; he did not dare to lift up his eyes to Heaven: for he felt that he had sinned and made God angry, and he was very sorry for his sin. He smote upon his breast, and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This was all he said. It was a very short prayer; not so long as the Pharisee's. But which prayer did God like best? Whom did He pardon and bless;—the proud, self-righteous Pharisee, or the humble, penitent publican? God did not attend to the Pharisee, for he did not feel his own sinfulness, he did not look in faith to Jesus for pardon: so he went home with his sins unforgiven, and without a blessing from God. But the poor publican

who felt himself so unworthy, and who cried for mercy with all his heart, was heard and answered. God forgave him his sins, and accepted him, for Christ's sake.

"God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." *James iv. 6.* We should remember this when we pray. We are all sinners; we all deserve to be punished by God. He looks at the heart; and the sins He sees there,—pride,

and anger, and selfishness, and evil tempers, are as displeasing to Him as theft and murder can be. We have no goodness to be proud of; and therefore when we come to God, we must come as poor sinners, looking to Jesus only for salvation, not to our own righteousness, and our own good works. And if we pray like the publican, then we shall also be pardoned as he was.

CCC.V.

THE GOOD PART.



AS Jesus was travelling, he passed through a little village called Bethany; and a woman, named Martha, who lived there, asked Him to come into her house. Martha was a good woman, and loved Jesus; and she was very much pleased when he came to see her. She made a great feast, and waited herself upon the company, and was very kind and hospitable.

Martha had a sister named Mary. Mary loved Jesus too, and she showed her love by sitting at His feet, and listening attentively to every word He said. When Martha saw that Mary did not come to help her, she felt a little angry, and she said to Jesus, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve one? Tell her to come and help me." And did Jesus send Mary away to help her sister? No; He turned to Martha, and said, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and

troubled about many things, but one thing is needful; and Mary has chosen that good part which shall never be taken away from her."

Why did Jesus say this? Was not Martha right to be kind and hospitable to her friends? Yes; but Martha was so busy and so careful about her worldly things, that she had no time to listen to the holy words which Jesus was saying; and this was wrong. We must never be too busy to attend to our souls. We should be active and industrious in what we have to do; but we ought to remember always to attend first and most to holy and heavenly things. "Seek first the kingdom of God."

What was the "good part" which Mary chose? To sit at Jesus' feet, and hear the words of salvation. And this is what we ought to do. Jesus speaks to us as he spoke to Mary. He speaks to us in His word, and tells us to come to Him,

and learn the way to Heaven. And this is the best thing we can choose. It is better than anything in the world, because you can never, never

lose it. If we humbly attend to Jesus now, we shall be taken to live with him for ever when we die.

COCVL

LAZARUS.

MARTHA and Mary had a brother named Lazarus. Lazarus was a very good man, and he and his two sisters loved and served God together. Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus. How happy they must all have been!

But at last sorrow came into this little peaceful family; for sorrow must come sometimes into every family in the world. Lazarus became very ill; and his sisters sent to tell Jesus, saying, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." Martha and Mary knew that Jesus was their dearest and best friend, and that he only could give real comfort in times of sorrow.

And did Jesus come directly and heal Lazarus? No; when he heard the message, He still stayed in the same place where He was. Martha and Mary looked for Him, and waited for Him, and hoped He would soon come to cure their poor brother. But no; Jesus did not come; and Lazarus grew worse and worse, and at last he died; and then he was carried to the grave, and buried; but Jesus was not there. Why was this? Did not Jesus care for Lazarus and Martha and Mary? Had he forgotten them?

No; Jesus loved them all still. He only waited to try their faith, and to show them His great power, and to teach them to trust Him more. So, at last, Jesus said to His disciples, "We will go now into Judea again. Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I will go and awake him out of sleep." Jesus meant that Lazarus was asleep in death; but the disciples did not understand this, so they said, "Lord, if Lazarus sleep he shall do well." Then Jesus explained to them what he meant. He said, "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad that I was not at Bethany when he died; because I wish you to believe in me, and to glorify God. Let us go now, and see Lazarus." So Jesus went to Bethany, and His disciples went with Him.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she ran to meet Him; but Mary sat still in the house. Martha looked very sad when she saw Jesus, and she said to Him, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus answered, "Thy brother shall rise again." Martha said, "Yes, I know he will rise again at the last day. All will rise then." Jesus meant to call Lazarus out of his grave very soon, without waiting till the last

day; Martha did not understand this at first; but she trusted in Jesus, and knew that all would be well. She had not forgotten what Jesus had said to her before. She had chosen "the good part" now, and felt she could never lose *that*, even when all earthly things were taken away. So Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God;" and then she went to Mary, and told her to come to Jesus.

When Mary saw Jesus, she fell down at His feet, and said, as Martha had, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died." And then she began to weep again very bitterly. When Jesus looked round, and saw them all weeping for sorrow, He felt very sad too; and He sighed, and said, "Where have you laid him?" Then they answered, "Lord, come and see." So they led Jesus to the grave. Jesus wept; and the Jews said one to another, "See how He loved him!"

At last they came to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Some of the people wondered at what Jesus said; but they obeyed, and took the stone from the mouth of the cave where Lazarus lay. Jesus lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and thanked and praised His Father; and then He turned to the grave, and called with a loud

voice, "Lazarus, come forth." But could Lazarus hear? Yes; even the dead can hear the voice of Jesus, for it is the voice of God. Lazarus heard, and lived, and arose, and came out of the tomb. He was dressed in grave-clothes, and his head was bound round with a napkin: but Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go." How rejoiced Martha and Mary were to see their dear brother again, and to hear his voice! And when they went back all together to their happy home, how they must have loved and praised their kind and gracious Saviour! They felt now that He had done all things well.

When our friends die, we cannot hope to have them back again, as Martha and Mary had Lazarus back again. We can never see them any more in this world. But the time will come "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." *John* v. 25. And what happy meetings there will be then among dear friends who, when on earth, loved and feared the Lord together! Martha and Mary, and Lazarus, could only live together for a few years, and then death parted them again; but those dear friends, who meet at the resurrection in the last day, will never part; they will be taken to an eternal home, and "go out no more" for ever.

CCCVII.

LITTLE CHILDREN BROUGHT TO JESUS.



OME very little children were once brought to Jesus. The kind friends who brought them, asked Him to put His hands upon them, and bless them; for those friends loved Jesus themselves, and they wished the children to learn to love Him too. They knew that the blessing of Jesus would make their little ones happier than anything the world can give. The disciples were angry when these children were brought to Jesus. They, perhaps, thought they would be troublesome to Jesus; so they reproved those who brought them, and wished to send them away. The disciples had soon forgotten all that Jesus said to them when He took a child and set it before them, and told them to be humble and gentle like that child. Jesus was displeased with His disciples now, and He said to them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not;" and then He took them up in His arms, and laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

We read no more of these little children. The Bible does not tell us their names, nor their histories. Perhaps some of them died young, before they had seen much of the sorrow and sin of the world; and, like the babes of Bethlehem, were soon taken to be with Jesus in Heaven. Perhaps some of them

lived to grow up, and to grow old, and then they must have suffered a great deal of pain and trouble; but in all their sorrows they had one to comfort them; for if they were God's children, the kind Saviour who had once said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," would say too, "Even to old age I am He, and to hoar hairs I will carry you." We cannot tell where they lived, nor when they died; but we may hope that they are all now safe and happy with Jesus; and that those little ones whom He blessed on earth, He will bless for ever in Heaven.

Jesus still says, "Suffer little children to come unto me." But how can they be brought to Him? for He is not upon earth now. Kind parents and friends bring little children to Jesus, when they pray for them, and teach them to pray, and tell them what their Saviour has done to save sinners. This is bringing children to Jesus. But the children themselves must be willing to come. The little ones who were brought to Jesus did not struggle and cry to go away. No: they lay quietly in the Saviour's arms, and loved to see Him smile so kindly on them. So children now must come humbly to Jesus and attend to all He tells them in His word, and say, as Samuel did when God spoke to him, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." 1 Sam. iii. 9.

CCCVIII

THE YOUNG RULER.

SOON after Jesus had blessed the little children, a young ruler came running towards Him; and he kneeled down, and said, "Good master, what shall I do to have eternal life?" Jesus answered, "Why dost thou call me good? There is only one who is good, and that is God." Jesus *was* good, for He was God; but He spoke in this way because He wished the young man to confess that He was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. But the young man did not confess this. Then Jesus said again, "If thou wilt have eternal life, keep the commandments." The young man answered, "I have kept them all from my youth up."

Was this true? Perhaps it was true that the young man honored God's law, and that he did what was right, and kind, and good to his fellow-creatures. But it could not be true that he had obeyed all God's commands. No man ever did this. We break God's commands every day; we break them in thought and will, even when we do not break them in word and deed. But this young man knew little of his own heart. "The heart is deceitful above

all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" *Jer. xvii. 9.* Only those who are taught by God's Spirit; and the ruler had not yet been so taught.

Jesus looked at the young man, and loved him. He loved him, because he was so gentle, and kind, and so anxious to do right. But Jesus pitied him too: for the ruler was still very ignorant, and his faith was very weak and small. Then Jesus said something to try if the young man really loved Him, and was willing to give up all for His sake. He said, "Yet lackest thou one thing. Go, and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor. And then come and follow me, and I will give thee treasures in Heaven." And was the young man willing to obey? No; he had great possessions; and he loved them so much that he could not give them up. He went away "very sorrowful; for he was very rich." His riches were his idol, for he loved them more than God.

The story should warn us not to love money, or possessions, or any thing more than God. Jesus said, "How hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"

CCCIX.

THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD.



ESUS told His disciples this parable. A man had a vineyard, and he went out early in the morning to hire laborers to work in it. He soon found some who were willing to come; so he promised to give them a penny a day, and sent them into the vineyard. A few hours after, the master went out again, and saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said to them, "Go into the vineyard, and I will give you all that is right." At noon, and in the afternoon, the master went out again; and he saw more men standing and doing nothing; so he sent them also into the vineyard. When it was almost evening, the master went out for the last time; and he still found some who had been idle the whole day. So he said to them, "How is this? Why do you stand here all the day idle?" They answered, "Because no man has hired us." Then the master said, "I will hire you. Go into the vineyard, and all which is right I will give you." So they went.

When the evening came, the master called all the laborers to pay them their wages. First came those who had been called last; and he gave to each of them a penny. Afterwards came those who had been called early; and the master gave to them also every man a penny. When these first laborers saw this,

they began to murmur. They said, "These last have only worked one hour; and thou hast given as much to them as to us, who have worked all through the heat of the day." But the master answered, "Have I not a right to do what I like with my own money? I promised to give you a penny each, and here it is; take it, and go away; for I choose to give to these last the same as unto you."

God is the master in the parable. He calls us to be His servants, and to work for Him. He has much for us to do. We are to attend to our own souls, and to try to do good to the souls of others also. God calls people by His word, and by His ministers, and by His Spirit, when they are living in idleness and sin. He says to them, "Come, and be my servants, and work for me." Some He calls in the morning when they are young. And how pleasant it is to begin to serve God early, like little Samuel, and Josiah, and many other holy children! Some He calls later in the day, when they are older. He speaks to those who are busy about their worldly things, and tells them to attend to heavenly things, which are so much better and so much pleasanter. And some people God calls "at the eleventh hour;" that is, when they are old, just before they die, just before it is too late, He comes to them in mercy, and invites them to love

serve Him. It is a blessing to be brought to God at any time; but it is best and pleasantest to learn to know Him early. We cannot begin too soon to love and serve God.

And what does God promise to all His faithful servants? Everlasting happiness in Heaven. But God's servants do not deserve this; they do not earn it, as the laborers earned their penny. We deserve

nothing whether we serve God a long time or a short time. And when, at the day of judgment, God calls His servants, and gives them what He promised, all they receive will be the *gift* of His love, not the *reward* of their services. For "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." *Romans vi. 23.*

CCCX.

THE BLIND BEGGAR.

JESUS went towards Jericho. As He drew near to the city, He saw a poor blind man sitting by the road-side begging. The name of the man was Bartimeus. Bartimeus heard the noise of people passing by, and he asked some near him who was coming. They said, "It is Jesus of Nazareth who is passing by." The blind man had heard of Jesus. He had heard, perhaps, how wonderfully he had cured other blind people; and he determined to ask Jesus to cure him too. So he cried, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." The people who were passing told Bartimeus to hold his peace; but he felt sure that Jesus would not be angry with him, so he cried out again and again, "Jesus, have mercy on me." Bartimeus was right to do this; he was right in thinking that Jesus was willing to cure him.

Jesus stood still, and commanded

the people to bring the blind man to Him. So some of them went, and said kindly to Bartimeus, "Be of good comfort; rise, He calleth thee." Then the blind man arose joyfully and came to Jesus. When he was come, Jesus asked, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Bartimeus answered, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Then Jesus said, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way. How thankful and happy he was now! He had no need to beg again.

We may learn something from this story. We all are, by nature, blind, and weak, and helpless; not in our bodies, but in our souls. And we are poor too; we have nothing. This is a very sad state. We ought to be as anxious to be helped and cured as Bartimeus was. We should pray as he did, "Jesus, have mercy on us." And Jesus, who heard and

answered him, will hear and answer us, if we pray, as he did, in faith, for He says, "All things that ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." *Matthew xxi. 22.*

 CCCXI.

ZACCHEUS.



AFTER Jesus had cured Bartimeus he went into Jericho. There was a man living in Jericho named Zaccheus; he was a publican, or tax-gatherer, and was very rich. Zaccheus had heard of Jesus, and wished to see Him: so he went out to look at Him as He passed by. But there was a great crowd of people around Jesus; and Zaccheus could not see over their heads, for he was a very little man. What could he do? Did he give up trying to see Jesus, and go quietly home again? No; Zaccheus did not do this. He was determined to see Jesus; so he ran before all the people, and climbed up into a tree by the road-side; and there he waited till Jesus passed. And did Jesus see Zaccheus? Yes; as soon as He came to the tree, he looked up and saw him, and spoke very kindly to him, and said, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thine house." Jesus knew what was in the heart of Zaccheus; He knew that Zaccheus really wished to know and love Him; and Jesus was always willing to teach those who were anxious to learn of Him. So Zaccheus came down from the tree, and

went home, and received Jesus joyfully.

Zaccheus was a rich man; but his riches did not tempt him to forsake Jesus. He was not like the young ruler, who "went away very sorrowful, because he was very rich." Zaccheus had learnt now to love Jesus more than all the world, and to make a right use of the riches which God had given him. He stood up before Jesus, and said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wronged any man, I will repay him four-fold." Zaccheus was sincere in what he professed. His faith taught him to be kind and honest; and this showed that it was a right, and true, and living faith, bringing forth good fruit; for "faith, without works is dead, being alone." *James ii. 17.*

Jesus said to Zaccheus, "To-day is salvation come to this house; for he also is a son of Abraham." Jesus meant, that Zaccheus had that true faith in him which had made Abraham so blessed and happy, many years before.

What a joyful day this was for Zaccheus! The happiest he had ever known, because it was the day when salvation came to him and

his family. If we want to be truly happy, we must receive Jesus into our homes, and families, and hearts, as Zaccheus did; for when Jesus comes, salvation comes too. He is willing to come to us. He says, "If a man love me, my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." *John* xiv. 23.

CCCXII.

THE BOX OF OINTMENT.



ABOUT this time, Jesus went again to Bethany. We read about Bethany before. It was the town in which Lazarus, and Mary, and Martha lived; where Lazarus had died, and where he had been raised to life again. A feast was made for Jesus, at the house of Simon the leper; and Lazarus and his sisters were there. They were all well and happy now. Lazarus sat at the table with Jesus, and Martha served; but we may hope that she had learnt not to be so "careful and troubled about many things," as to forget again "the one thing needful."

What did Mary do? She still sat humbly at the feet of Jesus, to hear His words. She had brought with her a box of very precious ointment; and she anointed his feet, and wiped them with the hair of her head. She did this because she loved and honored Jesus so much. But some of the company despised Mary for what she did. Judas Iscariot said, "Why is this waste of the ointment made? It might have been sold for much, and the money given to the poor."

Judas had no love for Jesus, and therefore he thought all wasted that was given to Him. But did Judas love the poor? No; he did not care for them. He pretended to be charitable, and collected money, and put it into a bag, and said he would give it to the poor, but this money he kept for himself, for Judas was a thief. His fellow-disciples did not know this; but Jesus did; He saw all the deceit of Judas's wicked heart.

When Judas spoke so unkindly about Mary, Jesus said, "Why do you trouble this woman? She has done a good work upon me. You have the poor always with you, and you may do them good whenever you please: but you will not have me with you always. I shall soon leave you. I am going to die; and Mary has come before my death, to anoint my body for burial. Wherever the Gospel is preached throughout all the world, there shall be told what this woman has done."

All who read the Gospel, read there what Mary did. It is written to teach us to be like her in love, and faith, and humility. This was

a great honor to Mary. She did not want honor; yet God has been pleased to give it her, for He says in His word, "Them that honor me, I will honor." 1 *Sam.* ii. 30.

CCCXIII.

JESUS GOING TO JERUSALEM.



THE time was now very near when Jesus must die; and He went to Jerusalem, which was the place where He was to suffer. Was He not afraid to go there? No; He was anxious to go; He wished to die, because He wished us to be saved; for we could never have been saved, if He had not died.

When Jesus came to the Mount of Olives, He called two of His disciples, and said, "Go into yonder village; and when you come there, you will see an ass tied, and a colt by her; loose them, and bring them to me. And if any one say to you, 'Why do you take them away?' you must answer, 'Because the Lord hath need of them;' and then the man will send them willingly." So the disciples went to the village, and found the ass and the colt, as Jesus said; and they began to loose them. Then some people, who were standing near, said, "Why do you take away the asses?" The disciples answered, "The Lord hath need of them;" and then the men let them go.

Had Jesus told these people to have the ass and the colt ready for Him when He sent? No; but Jesus knew where the animals were,

and He knew that the men would be willing to part with them. Jesus knew all things, and all things belonged to Him, because He was God.

When the disciples brought the asses to Jesus, they took their clothes, and put them upon the colt; and then they set Jesus upon it, to ride into Jerusalem. As they went along, a great number of people followed; some of them threw their garments in the way, and some cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. All this was in honor of Jesus; and they cried, and said, "Hosanna in the highest; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

So Jesus came to Jerusalem, and went into the Temple; and there the little children began to praise Him too, and cried, "Hosanna." The priests and scribes were displeased; but Jesus loved to hear the children's song; for He thinks none too young to pray to Him, and to praise Him. There were still many people buying and selling in the Temple. Jesus had driven them out before; and now He sent them away again, and told them not to make His Father's house a house of merchandise.

Many years before Jesus was born, the prophet Zechariah had foretold what we have been reading. He was taught, by God's Spirit, to prophesy about Jesus Christ coming in triumph to Jerusalem. He said, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." *Zech. ix. 9.*

Then Jesus went from Jerusalem to Bethany. As He was returning, He felt hungry; and He saw a fig-tree, and went to seek for fruit. But there was no fruit on the tree; it looked well, for it was full of leaves; but not one fig was on it. Then Jesus spoke to the tree, and said, "Let no fruit grow on thee for ever." The next day, Jesus and His disciples passed that way again;

and they looked at the fig-tree, and saw that it was dried up from the root. Then Peter said, "Lord, behold, the fig-tree Thou cursedst is withered away!"

Why did Jesus curse the fig-tree? Perhaps it was to teach a lesson to us. We are said to be like trees; and if we profess to be God's people, to be good and holy, then we are like trees full of leaves;—looking well in the sight of men. But a good tree will have fruit as well as leaves; and so we, if we are truly God's people, shall *do* what is right, as well as *profess* what is right; we shall bring forth good fruit, to the praise and glory of God. The bad fig-tree was cursed by Jesus, and withered away; and all those who only pretend to be righteous, and are not really so, must at last perish for ever.

CCCXIV.

THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN.

DID Jesus tell the people any more parables? Yes; many more. He told this one to some of the proud Jews at Jerusalem. A man had a vineyard; and he digged it, and planted it, and made a wine-press, and built a tower in it; and then he let it out to some husbandmen, and went into a far country. When the right time came, the master of the vineyard sent his servants to receive the fruits of it. But the wicked husbandmen, instead of attending to the message, took the servants, and beat one, and killed another, and threw stones at another. Soon after, the master sent some more servants; but the husbandmen did the same to them. At last the owner of the vineyard sent his own son; for he thought, perhaps they might reverence him. But no; as soon as the wicked husbandmen saw the son, they said, "Come, let us kill him." And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. And what did the lord do when he heard this? He came, and destroyed those wicked husbandmen, and let out the vineyard to others.

This parable was spoken for the

proud unbelieving Jews. They were like the husbandmen in the parable. God had put them in a pleasant country, where they had many blessings; and He wished them to be obedient and faithful to Him, and to use all they had in His service. He had often sent messengers to tell them this. He sent the prophets, and John the Baptist; but the Jews would not attend to these messengers. Like the wicked husbandmen, they hated and killed them. At last God sent His own Son. Jesus Christ Himself came among them. And what did the Jews do to Him? We shall read very soon that they took Him, and nailed Him to a cross, and put Him to death. This was the most wicked act they could do; and soon after, punishment came upon them. Their country and their blessings were taken from them, and given to others, and they were left, sad and forsaken, scattered over the world. This was the dreadful punishment of the unbelieving, rebellious Jews; and it is a warning to us, for we have as many blessings as they had; and if we disobey God like them, we shall be punished as well as they.

CCCXV.

THE MARRIAGE GARMENT.



WHEN Jesus told the people another parable. A certain king made a marriage for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the feast. But they would not come; and they even killed the servants who were sent to call them. Then the king was very angry; and he sent an army, and destroyed these wicked men, and burnt up their city. After this, he told his servants to go out again, and call all they found, and bring them to the marriage. So the servants went and gathered together a great many from the highways and hedges, and brought them to the feast.

But were these poor people fit to sit down with the king and his son at the marriage? No; not in their own clothes, for they were ragged and dirty; but the king had a beautiful garment ready for each of them; and when they were dressed in this, they looked quite fit to appear at the feast. Were not these poor people very thankful to the king for his kindness, and very much pleased to put on the beautiful robe? One of them was not. When the garment was offered to him, he would not have it. He said his own clothes were good enough; and he was too proud to accept the king's beautiful robe. So he went in, dressed in his own ragged garments.

At last the king came to see the company. He looked very much pleased with those who were dressed in the marriage-garment; and spoke kindly to them, and welcomed them to the feast. But when he saw the man standing there in his own dirty and ragged clothes, he was surprised and angry; and he called him, and said, "Friend, how camest thou in here, without a wedding-garment?" The man made no answer. He felt now how foolish he had been, and began to feel frightened; for he could not excuse himself. Then the king turned to his servants, and said, "Take that man, and bind him hand and foot, and cast him out; for he shall not stay here, and eat at my table." So the man was sent away in disgrace.


The first part of this parable is very much like the parable of the great supper which we have read before; but the last part, about the marriage-garment is new. What does it mean? God invites us all to the marriage-supper of the Lamb in Heaven; but how may we go to it? Not in our own goodness; God will not accept us in that. The Bible says, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;" like the dirty and ragged clothes of the man in the parable. They who appear in these at the day of judgment will be cast out as he was. But there is a righteousness in which we can be accepted; and that is the

righteousness of Christ, which is "unto all and upon all them who believe" in Him. This is like the beautiful marriage-garment in the parable. It is called the "fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." *Rev. xix. 8.* In this all God's people will appear in Heaven.

But how can we get the marriage-garment? God is willing to give it to all who are willing to receive it. He says, "I counsel thee to buy of me white raiment that thou mayest be clothed." *Rev. iii. 18.* And we may buy it "without money and without price."

 CCCCXVI.

THE WIDOW'S OFFERING.

S Jesus was sitting near the treasury, by the Temple, a great many people passed; and, as they passed, they cast money into the treasury; this money was to pay for the things wanted in the service of the Temple. Some of these people were very rich, and they threw in a great deal of money; but at last a person came who was not rich. This was a poor widow, who was obliged to earn all she had, and was very poor after all. Did she pass without putting in anything? No; this woman loved God; and she loved His Temple, and His service; and she felt that she must give something to show her love and gratitude. She had not much to give; but as she passed by, she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. Jesus saw what she did; and He knew why she did it. So He turned to His disciples, and said, "I tell you, this poor woman has cast more into the treasury than any of those rich people. They cast in of their

abundance; but she of her want has cast in all that she had, even all her living."

Jesus was more pleased with the widow's two mites, than he was with the gold and silver of the rich. Why? Because she showed more faith and love than they did. She denied herself, that she might give something to God. Perhaps, when she went home that day, she had no food to eat; no more money to buy even a piece of bread. But then she had God's blessing, and that was better than all the riches of the world.

We should try to be like this poor widow. There are treasuries now, where money is cast for God's service, and we ought all to throw something into those treasuries. There are Missionary Societies, Bible Societies, Sunday School Societies, and many more. All the money collected for these is used for holy purposes; it is given to God. Cannot we help to fill these treasuries? We ought to do what we can. Those who are rich ought

to give much; those who are poor may give something; they may give their farthings to God, if they have no more to give. And if they give as the poor widow did, God will not despise their little offerings. He looks at the heart more than at the money. A very little given with faith, and love, and gratitude, pleases Him better than great sums given without. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Cor. ix. 7.

CCCXVII.

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM.



AS Jesus was going out of the Temple, His disciples came and showed Him the buildings of the Temple; for they were very beautiful, and the disciples wanted Jesus to admire them. But Jesus answered, "Do you see all these things? I tell you there shall not be left here one stone upon another."

Then Jesus went up to the Mount of Olives, and sat down there. When they were alone, Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, began to ask Jesus some questions about what He had said to them; for they did not understand what He meant. They said, "Tell us when shall these things be? What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" The disciples wanted to know the very day when their Master would come again. Jesus did not tell them this; but he told them a great deal about the destruction of Jerusalem, and about His own coming to judgment, of which the destruction of Jerusalem was a type. He said, "When I am

gone, take care that you are not deceived; for false Christs and false prophets will come, and try to deceive you; but you must not believe them, nor attend to what they say. Then you will hear of wars, and famines, and earthquakes, and plagues. Dreadful sights will be seen in the sky, and men will be in great fear and sorrow. But when you see all these things, do not fear; only remember that they will be the signs of destruction coming upon Jerusalem. Then you will be hated, and persecuted, and imprisoned, and some of you even killed for my sake. But still you must not fear; for I shall be with you in all your sorrows. After this, great armies will come against Jerusalem. When you see them, you must flee directly to the mountains. You must not stay to take your clothes, nor anything you have; but escape directly, and then you will be safe. But Jerusalem, the Temple, and the city will all be destroyed; the people in it will be killed or taken prisoners; and Jerusalem will be

trodden down of the Gentiles for many generations. All these things will soon come to pass."

Then Jesus spoke of His own second coming. He said, "God only knows when that day will be. I shall come when people are not looking for me, nor thinking of me. I shall come suddenly, as the flood came upon the wicked in the time of Noah. I shall come in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory, and I shall send my angels to gather together my own people from every part of the earth, and take them to be with me for ever. Then two women will be grinding together; one will be taken, and the other left. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken, and the other left. Watch, then; for you know not when your Lord will come. Be ready to meet me with joy at that day."

All that Jesus foretold about the destruction of Jerusalem soon came to pass. Not very long after Christ's ascension to Heaven, a false prophet appeared, and said that he was Christ; and many of the Jews believed him, though they had rejected the true Messiah. There were wars in many parts of the world; and troubles of every kind. Wonderful and dreadful sights were seen in Jerusalem, unlike anything ever seen before. The disciples understood that these were signs of destruction coming upon Jerusalem, for they remembered what Jesus had told them; but the wicked unbelieving people did not understand them. At last the Roman army came to besiege Jerusalem. Then the disciples remembered again what Jesus had told them; and

they all left the city, and escaped to a place called Pella, in the mountains of Gilead; and there they were kept in safety. Not one perished. But it was a sad time for the poor Jews in Jerusalem then. They suffered very much from famine in the long siege; many died of hunger; some ate even their own children. Numbers were taken prisoners every day, and crucified; and the city was full of dead bodies, and the streets were red with blood. At last Jerusalem was taken. The Romans burnt the beautiful Temple, and ploughed up the ground where it had stood; and the holy vessels they carried away to Rome. The Jews were killed; or taken captives, and sent to live miserably in distant lands. From that time, they have been scattered over the world, and their pleasant land has been possessed by the Gentiles. All these dreadful sufferings were the punishment of their sins, particularly that dreadful sin of rejecting and crucifying their Messiah. But God has not cast off His people Israel for ever. He says to them in His word, "I will take you from among the heathen, and bring you into your own land. A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." *Ezek. xxxvi. 24—26.*

The destruction of Jerusalem is a type of something still more dreadful—the destruction of the wicked at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot tell when this will be; but we know that it will be a very dreadful day for those who are not ready for it, and a very glorious and happy day for those



JERUSALEM.

who are ready for it ; for the people of God will then be taken to live with Him for ever. We should pray that we may be ready for the coming of Jesus, that our sins may be all washed away in His blood, and our

hearts made new by his Holy Spirit ; and then we shall not be afraid to see Him, but say with joy, " Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." *Rev.* xxii. 20.

CCCXVIII.

THE TEN VIRGINS.

WHEN Jesus told His disciples this parable. The kingdom of Heaven is like unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. The marriage was in the night ; so they carried these lamps with them to give them light. Five of these virgins were foolish, and they forgot to take oil with them. But the five others were wise, and they took oil in their vessels with their lamps. The bridegroom did not come directly ; and as the virgins waited for him, they all fell asleep. At last, in the middle of the night, a cry was made, " Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him." Then the virgins all arose, and began to trim their lamps. The wise had plenty of oil, and their lamps soon burnt brightly ; but the lamps of the foolish were gone out, and they had no oil to trim them with. So they went to the wise virgins, and said, " Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." But the wise answered, " We have none to spare ; you must go to those who sell, and buy for yourselves." So the five foolish virgins went

away to buy oil ; but while they were gone, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. The five foolish virgins soon came back, and knocked at the door, and cried, " Lord, Lord, open to us." But no ; it was too late. The door could not be opened then. The answer was, " I know you not ;" and the foolish virgins were sent away, and could not join the happy company at the marriage-feast.

What does all this mean ? Who are the virgins and the bridegroom ? and what is meant by the lamps, and the oil, and the marriage-feast ? All who live in a Christian country, as we do, are the virgins ; Jesus is the bridegroom, and he invites us to be ready for the marriage-feast—Heaven. But there is a great difference among those who call themselves the people of God. Some *profess* to be his people, but do not really love Him ; the grace of God is not in their hearts. These are the foolish virgins, who took their lamps, and took no oil in them. The lamp is like the outward profession ; the oil is like the inward

grace in the heart. Others do really love God; his grace is in their hearts. These are the wise virgins, who took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

Jesus gives people time to prepare for his coming. He tarries, as the bridegroom did; but He will come at last. He will come at the day of judgment, and we shall all hear His voice then. And who will be safe and happy in that awful day? Only those who have the oil—the grace of God in their hearts. But it will

be too late *then* to seek for pardon and salvation; and those who are ready for Heaven themselves, will not be able to help even their dearest friends who are not ready. How sad it will be to find the door of Heaven shut, and to hear Jesus say, "I know you not;" and to be sent away into darkness and despair for ever! "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh."

COOXIX.

THE TALENTS.



THIS is another parable. A certain man was going to travel into a far country; so he called his servants, and gave some money to each, and told them to use it rightly, and to account for it when he returned. He gave to one servant five talents; to another two; and to another one; and then took his journey. After a long time, the master returned, and called the servants, and reckoned with them. So the first, who had received five talents; came and said, "Lord, thou gavest me five talents; I have traded with them, and gained five more." The master answered, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Then the second came, and said, "Lord, thou gavest me two talents; I have gained two more." His master answered, "Well done, good

and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." At last, came the servant who had received one talent; but he did not look happy, and glad to see His Master, as the others did. He said, "Lord. I know thou art a hard and unkind man; and I was afraid, and went and hid the talent in the ground; there thou hast what is thine." But the master answered, "Thou wicked and slothful servant! If thou knewest that I am a hard master, thou oughtest to have used my money the more carefully." And then he turned to his servants, and said, "Take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents; and cast the slothful servant into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

God is our master, and he has given to each of us talents; money, health, life, time; all these things

are talents. To some He has given little, and to others much; but to all He has given something; and for these things God will bring us into judgment. Now we ought to use the talents given us in God's service, and for God's glory. If we make a bad use of them, or no use at all, we shall at last be punished as wicked and slothful servants, and sent away far from God and happiness for ever.

Then Jesus spoke to His disciples about the day of judgment still more solemnly. He said, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He shall sit upon the throne of His glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and He will divide them one from another, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. And He will put the righteous on His right hand, and the wicked on His left. Then He will say to those on His right, Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me; in prison, and ye came unto

me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Will the righteous be saved because they did all these good things? No; they will be saved only by the blood and righteousness of Christ, not by their own goodness. They will know this, and rejoice to give Him all the praise and glory; yet Jesus will not forget their labors of love for His sake.

Then the King will turn to those on His left hand, and say, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not:—inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me."

Those on the left hand of the judge will be people who had no love to Christ, no faith in Him, and who had never shown any kindness to His people for His sake. And therefore they will be condemned in that awful day: they will be sent into everlasting punishment; but the righteous will be taken into life eternal.

OOOXX.

THE LAST SUPPER.



HE time was now come for Jesus to be betrayed and put to death. His wicked disciple Judas Iscariot, of whom we have often read, went secretly to the priests and captains, the enemies of Jesus, and asked, "What will you give me if I deliver Jesus unto you?" They promised to give him thirty pieces of silver; so Judas went away, thinking how he could best betray his kind Master. See how sin grows in the heart, when it is not resisted and subdued! Judas had long been a thief and a hypocrite; now his love of money and his deceit led him to sell and betray Jesus.

The passover was kept at this time. That feast was typical of the death of Christ, the Lamb of God; and Jesus wanted to eat of it with His disciples once more, before He fulfilled the type by suffering on the cross. So He called two of His disciples, and said to them, "Go into the city, and there you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. And wherever he shall go in, say to the good man of the house, the master saith, 'Where is the room where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room, furnished; there make ready."

The disciples went, and found all as Jesus had told them; and they made ready the passover; and in

the evening, Jesus came to eat it with the twelve. It was a very mournful time. Jesus knew all that was going to happen; and as he looked round, and saw Judas, he felt very sad; but the disciples did not know at first why their dear Master was so sorrowful.

When the paschal feast was ended, Jesus rose from the table, and put off some of His garments, and took a towel, and girded Himself. Then He poured water into a basin, and began to wash His disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel. But when Jesus came to Peter, Peter felt ashamed that his Master should wash the feet of such a poor sinful man as he felt himself to be, and he said, "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet." But Jesus answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Jesus meant that Peter's sins must all be washed away in his Saviour's blood, and his heart made clean by the Holy Spirit, or Peter could never be with Jesus in Heaven. Peter understood this directly, and he said, "Lord, wash not only my feet, but also my hands, and my head." Peter's sins were washed away, and his heart was made clean; and the other disciples were clean also, all but one. That one was Judas. Jesus washed the feet of Judas, but he had not washed his soul; for Judas had never repented, never asked Jesus to take away his sins.

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JESUS WASHING PETER'S FEET.

When Jesus had finished, he sat down again with the disciples. And then he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? I am your Lord and Master, yet I have washed the feet of you, my disciples. I did this to give you an example of humility and love. If I have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. Be kind and full of love one to another." Then Jesus looked very sad again, and said, "Verily I say unto you, one of you shall betray me." The disciples wondered, for they did not know what Jesus meant. They could not see the heart of Judas, as their Master could. So they began every one to ask, "Lord, is it I?" And another said, "Is it I?" At last Judas asked, "Lord, is it I?" Jesus answered, "Yes; it is thou;" but the other disciples did not hear this. Peter was very anxious to know who it was who should betray Jesus, so he made signs to John to ask. John was sitting next to Jesus, and rested his head on Jesus' bosom; for he loved his dear Master very much; and Jesus loved him. So John looked up to Jesus, and said, "Lord, who is it that will betray thee?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it." So Jesus dipped the sop in the dish, and gave it to Judas. Then Satan came into the heart of Judas, and tempted him to do now the wicked thing he had been thinking of so long. Jesus knew what was in the heart of Judas, and he looked

at him, and said, "What thou doest, do quickly." Then Judas arose, and went out. Where did he go? To the priests and captains, to lead them to Jesus that very night. But the other disciples thought that Jesus had sent him upon some business; to buy something for the feast, perhaps; or to give money to the poor.

While Jesus was sitting at table with his disciples he took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to each of them, and said, "Take and eat this; this is my body, which is given for you." Afterwards, he took the cup of wine, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood which is shed for many. Do this in remembrance of me."

The followers of Christ now obey this command, when they eat bread and drink wine at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. When in love and faith they celebrate this ordinance, they learn what Jesus meant when he said, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." As our weak bodies are strengthened and refreshed by eating bread and drinking wine, so are our perishing souls, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died upon the cross to save sinners. When Christians receive the Lord's Supper, they should do so in faith, and with a thankful remembrance of the death of Christ. St. Paul says, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." 1 Cor. xi. 26.

CCCXXI.

GETHSEMANE.



WHEN Jesus and His disciples had finished supper, they all sang a hymn together. Their hearts were very sorrowful; but they were not too sorrowful to praise God. They knew that God could comfort them in all their troubles.

Then they went out to the mount of Olives. Jesus had yet many things to say to His disciples, and he talked to them as they walked along. He told them of the sad things which would happen that night. He said, "All you will be offended because of me this night. I, your Shepherd, shall be smitten; and you, my sheep, will be scattered abroad." But Peter hastily answered, "I will never forsake thee. Other men may be offended, but I will never be offended." Peter loved his Master very much, and thought he should never be tempted to leave Him. But Peter did not know how deceitful his heart was; he did not feel his own weakness. He trusted to himself too much, and forgot to ask help of God. So Jesus turned to Peter, and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." But Peter again answered, "Though I should die with thee, I will never deny thee." And so they all said.

Then Jesus began to talk to them

of other things. He wished to comfort them before he was taken away. He said, "Do not be troubled when I go from you. I am going to my Father's house, and I shall make ready a place there for each of you. And then I will come again, and take you to be with me where I am. You know where I am going, and you know the way. I am going to Heaven, and I am the way to Heaven—the only way. And when I am gone, I will send you another Comforter. I will send the Holy Spirit of truth, and he shall come and dwell in your hearts, and teach you all things. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Then Jesus warned them not to trust to themselves, nor to think that they could do anything good without Him. He said, "I am the vine, and you are the branches. If a branch is cut off from the vine, it will bear no fruit; it will wither and die. But if it stays in the vine, it will receive strength; and then it will bring forth fruit. So it is with you. If you live in me, believe in me, ask me for help in all you do, then you will be enabled to serve me aright, and to glorify your Father in Heaven. But without me you can do nothing. Those

who do not live in me, will perish like a withered branch, which is cast into the fire, and burned. One of the good fruits you must bring forth, is love. This is a new commandment which I give you, Love one another. I know the world will hate you, as it has hated me. But you need not be troubled at this. You have my love, and that is better than the love of any one in this world. I shall soon show my love by dying for you. Love one another, then, as I have loved you." Then Jesus prayed to his Father, and asked Him to bless His disciples; to keep them from evil in this world, and at last to bring them to His glory in Heaven.

And now Jesus and his disciples were come to the brook Cedron, or Kidron. This was the same brook which David passed over, when he fled from his wicked son Absalom. David was a type of Jesus in his sorrows. But David's sorrows were not so great as the sorrows of Jesus.

Jesus and the disciples crossed the brook, and came into a garden called Gethsemane. Then He said to His disciples, "Sit you here, while I go and pray yonder;" but He called Peter, and James, and John, to come with Him a little farther. Then He said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, unto death; stay here, and watch." So He left the three disciples there, and went on alone, and fell down on the ground, and prayed. He cried, "O my Father, if it be possible, take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt." What did Jesus mean? The dreadful pain and death which He knew He should soon suffer, was the bitter

"cup" of which Jesus spoke. As man, He dreaded pain and suffering, for He felt as we do. But Jesus knew that if He did not suffer, mankind could not be saved; and, therefore, He was willing to bear all the pain and sorrow which His heavenly Father laid upon Him. Let us learn a lesson of submission to God from the example of the blessed Jesus.

It was needful for Jesus to suffer all this. The cup of sorrow could not be taken away; but His heavenly Father sent an angel from heaven, to strengthen and comfort Him. Then He arose and went to His disciples. He found them asleep; sorrow had made them feel heavy and weary; and they had not attended to the command of Jesus, "Watch and pray." So Jesus said to Peter, "Peter, couldst not thou watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Peter had said, a little time before, that he would never deny nor forsake his Master; but Peter was not now seeking strength from God to enable him to keep his promise. Temptation would soon come, and Peter was not praying for power to resist it.

Then Jesus left His disciples again, and went and prayed as He had done before. He prayed more and more earnestly; and in His agony drops of blood fell from His body to the ground. Then He went again to His disciples, and found them still sleeping; so He left them, and prayed as before. After this, He came once more to His sleeping disciples, and said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest. The time is come. The Son of man is betrayed.

Rise, let us go. Here is he who betrayeth me." There was no time to watch and pray now; for Judas was coming, and a multitude with him. The disciples had wasted their time in sleep, while their Master was praying; and now the hour of temptation was come, and they had not sought strength to resist it.

When Jesus saw His enemies coming towards Him, He did not try to hide or escape from them. He went to meet them, and asked, "Whom seek ye?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said, "I am He." And when He said this, His enemies went back, and fell to the ground. Why? Because they felt the power of Jesus as God. They saw that there was something in Him very different from other men; and they were afraid, and overcome by it. Jesus could have easily escaped, for His enemies had no power to hurt Him against His will. But Jesus was willing to be taken, and to suffer, and to die, because He knew that all this was needful for our salvation. So He stood quietly before His enemies, till they recovered themselves, and arose from the ground.

Wicked Judas was standing there. Before he brought the priests and the soldiers into the garden to take Jesus, he had said to them, "I will give you a sign, that you may know whom you must seize. I will go to Jesus, and kiss Him. Then you must run directly, and hold Him fast, and lead Him away." So now Judas went up to Jesus, and said, "Hail Master," and kissed Him. What a kiss that was! How wicked of Judas to pretend to love His

Master so much, just at the moment when he was betraying Him to His enemies! Jesus knew the deceit of Judas. He knew why he kissed Him. Yet Jesus did not drive Judas away, nor look angrily upon him. He only said, "Friend, wherefore art thou come? Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Then the multitude laid hands on Jesus, and took Him away.

Where were the disciples? They were standing by: and when they saw that their Master was so cruelly seized by His enemies, they rushed forward to defend Him; and Peter drew his sword, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his ear. The servant's name was Malchus. But Jesus said to Peter, "Put up thy sword into the sheath, and do not try to defend me. If I pleased, I could now pray to my Father, and He would directly send me a great multitude of angels. But I do not wish this. I am willing to suffer all, and to fulfil all which has been prophesied of me." Then Jesus touched the servant's ear, and healed it. How kind and gentle He was even to His cruel enemies!

Then Jesus turned to the multitude, and said, "Are you come out against me as if I were a thief, with swords and staves to take me? I have often sat teaching in the temple, and you did me no hurt then. But the Scripture must be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled.

The captains and soldiers took Jesus, and led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest. But Peter still wished to see what would be

done with his Master; so he followed afar off, and went into the palace of the high priest, and sat down to warm himself by the fire.

The priests and enemies of Jesus were now trying to accuse him of some wickedness, that they might condemn Him to death. But no one could prove that He had ever done wrong. Jesus was without sin. He had never disobeyed one command of God. What then could His enemies do? How could they accuse Him? These wicked men at last found two false witnesses, who came, and said, "We heard this man say that He would destroy the temple of God, and build it again in three days." Had Jesus ever said this? No; He had said something very different from what His enemies thought. Jesus had been speaking of the "temple of His body." And He had told the people that *that* temple would be destroyed, and raised again in three days. And this was fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross, and rose from the dead the third day. But the un-

believing Jews would not rightly understand the words of Jesus.

The high priest told Jesus to answer the accusation of the wicked men; but Jesus held His peace. Then the high priest said again, "Tell me, who art thou? Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?" Jesus answered, "I am; and hereafter you shall see me coming in the clouds of Heaven." Did the high priest believe what Jesus said? No; he cried out, "This is blasphemy. You have heard it. What think you?" They all answered, "He is guilty of death." And then they began to spit in His face, and to smite Him, and mock Him. But Jesus bore it all meekly and patiently. This is another lesson for us. It should teach us to be meek and gentle even to our enemies. For "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not." 1 Peter ii. 21—23.

OOOXXII

PETER'S SIN.



ALL this time, Peter was in the high priest's palace, warming himself by the fire. He told no one that he was a disciple of Jesus, for he was afraid of being known among so many enemies. But at last, a maid-servant belonging to the palace came in, and looked at Peter, and she thought she remembered his face, and said, "Thou too wast with Jesus of Nazareth." But Peter denied, and answered, "I know not what thou sayest." Then he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. The cock crowing ought to have reminded Peter of the warning Jesus had given him.

Soon after, another maid saw Peter, and she turned to those standing by, and said, "He belongs to Jesus of Nazareth." But Peter denied again, saying, "I do not know the man." Not long after, some more of the people came to Peter, and said, "Surely thou art one of the friends of Jesus; for thou art a Galilean, and speakest as they do." Then Peter began to curse and to swear, and said, "I know not this man of whom you speak." Just then the cock crew again. Jesus was not far off. As He stood before the high priest, He could see Peter, and hear what he said. And how sad for Jesus, in all His trouble and sorrow, to find one of his own disciples denying him so wickedly! When the cock crew,

the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. He did not speak a word, but Peter understood the look. It made him remember the warning which Jesus had given him when Peter said, "I will never deny thee." And then Peter thought how he had forgotten that warning, and denied his kind Master. Jesus was soon going to die, and Peter could not now ask His forgiveness. And then he might have thought, "Perhaps I shall never see Him again. Perhaps He will never forgive me, never love me any more." Peter could not bear this sad thought. "He went out, and wept bitterly."

Peter had sinned indeed very greatly. He had told lies, he had denied his Master, he had cursed and sworn, and taken God's holy name in vain. And why was this? How was it that Peter, who loved his Master so much, could deny Him in such a wicked way? Why did he forget his promise so soon? It was because Peter had made that promise in his own strength, not in God's strength. Peter was a poor, weak, sinful man. He forgot to ask help from God, and therefore he sinned in this dreadful way. We should learn from this sad story, not to trust in ourselves, but to pray for grace to enable us to resist temptation. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" 1 Cor. x. 12.

Could Jesus forgive Peter? Yes:

Peter repented and prayed for pardon; and Jesus saw his tears and heard his prayers, and forgave, and saved him. Jesus is willing to pardon all who truly repent and turn to Him. He says, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away." *Hosea* xiv. 4.

CCCXXIII.

THE END OF JUDAS.

IT was now morning. The enemies of Jesus were determined to have Him put to death; so they bound Him and led Him away to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, to be judged.

Where was Judas all this time? He was with the enemies of Jesus. He had betrayed his master, he had received the thirty pieces of silver from the priests, and he now saw that Jesus was condemned, and would soon be put to death. How did Judas feel? He felt very miserable. He knew how wicked he had been. He knew that Jesus did not deserve to die; for he had seen how holy He was; how kind and good even to His enemies. And then Judas looked at the money, and thought, "I have betrayed my Master for this." That money made Judas very unhappy now. He could not bear to keep it, nor to look upon it. So he took the thirty pieces of silver, and brought them to the priests, and said, "I have sinned. I have betrayed the innocent blood."

Did not the priests pity Judas when they saw his trouble? No; these wicked men had no pity in them; they only answered, "What is that to us? See thou to that." So Judas threw down the pieces of silver in the temple, and went out. Where did he go? Did he go like Peter, and weep bitterly, and pray for pardon? No; Judas was sorry for what he had done; but he was not truly penitent. His sorrow was not "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation." *2 Cor.* vii. 10. He was in despair. He did not humble himself, and pray for pardon, as Peter did; but "he departed, and went and hanged himself." This was the dreadful death of Judas. Where did his soul go then? The Bible tells us, it went "to his own place;" to that sad place where all must go who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ; who are hypocrites, like Judas; who profess to know Him, but "in works deny Him."

CCCXXIV.

PONTIUS PILATE.



WHEN the people brought Jesus to Pontius Pilate the governor, and began to accuse Him. They said, "This man troubles the nation, and forbids the people to pay tribute, and calls Himself a king." Then Pilate said to Jesus, "Art thou the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "I am." Pilate turned to the people, and said, "I find no fault in this man." But they all grew more angry, and answered, "He stirreth up the people, teaching in every place, from Galilee to Jerusalem."

When Pilate heard that Jesus came from Galilee, he sent Him to Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, who was staying at Jerusalem at that time. Herod was very glad to see Jesus. Why? Not because he believed in Him, and loved Him; but because he had heard of the wonderful things He did, and was anxious to see some of his miracles. But Jesus worked no miracle to please wicked Herod, and did not answer one of his questions; for Jesus knew that Herod did not ask humbly and sincerely, and because he really wished to be taught. Then Herod and his soldiers cruelly mocked Jesus, and sent Him back to Pilate.

Pilate felt in his heart that Jesus was innocent; so he called the people, and said, "I find no fault in this man; I do not think he deserves to die, nor does Herod think

so. You know, I always set free one prisoner at the feast of the Pass-over; I will therefore scourge this man, and let him go." But the people cried, "No, no; we do not wish him to be set free. Let him be crucified, and release unto us Barabbas." Barabbas was a wicked murderer, who was a prisoner at this time. Pilate said again, "Why, what evil has He done?" But the people cried again, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." When Pilate saw how determined they were to put Jesus to death, he let them have their wish. But first he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man: see ye to it." The people cried, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children." Then Pilate released Barabbas, and scourged Jesus, and gave Him up to His enemies.

Pilate knew in his heart that Jesus did not deserve to die, yet he let Him be crucified. This was very unjust, very wicked in Pilate. The water in which he washed his hands, in the sight of the people, could not wash away his sin in the sight of God. Only the blood of Jesus, whom he gave up to be crucified, could wash it away; but we do not read that Pilate ever asked to be washed in that blood "which cleanseth from all sin."

What did the people mean when they said "His blood be on us, and on our children?" They meant

that they were willing to bear themselves all the blame and punishment of murdering Jesus. They were so angry and mad with rage, that they hardly knew what they said. But God heard their words, and He has remembered them. Those words have been fulfilled in a very dreadful way. The Jews have been punished for their sin for many generations. The blood of Jesus,—the curse of having murdered the Son of God, has been upon them and their children for more than eighteen hundred years. When we think of the Jews scat-

tered over the earth, without a home, and without a king, we should remember why they are thus punished ;—because they crucified their Messiah. And then we should pray God to hasten that happy time when they will repent, and be restored to God's favor again. Then they will "look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn ;" and they will seek to have His blood sprinkled upon their hearts, and to wash in that "fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." *Zec. xiii. 1.*

CCCXXV.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.



WHEN the soldiers took Jesus, and tore off His clothes, and put on Him a purple robe. And they platted a crown of thorns, and put it upon His head, and gave Him a reed to hold in His right hand for a sceptre ; and then they bowed before Him, mocking Him, and pretending to honor Him as a king ; and said, "Hail, King of the Jews !" Then they spit on Him, and smote Him on the head with the reed. And after they had mocked Him, they took off the purple robe, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

At first, they made Jesus Himself carry the cross on which He was to die ; but He was too weak to carry it far ; so they called a man named Simon, whom they met on the road,

and made him carry it. As Jesus passed along, many of His friends came out, and followed Him, weeping very bitterly. Some of them were women ; those women, perhaps, whom He had healed, or whose friends He had raised to life. When Jesus saw them following, He turned to them, and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children. Weep for your country, and for all the sorrow which is coming upon it." Jesus could feel for His friends and His country in all His sufferings. He cared more for their sorrow than for His own.

At last, the multitude came to a place outside the gate of Jerusalem, called Golgotha or Calvary. There they crucified Jesus. They nailed His hands and His feet to the cross,

and set up the cross in the ground, and left Him to hang upon it till He died.

It was usual to give spiced wine to those who were crucified, to quiet their pain, and help them to bear it; so some of the people who were with Jesus, gave Him wine mingled with bitter gall. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. Jesus did not wish His pain to be lessened. He was willing to bear it all. Then the soldiers took the raiment of Jesus, and divided it among themselves, casting lots. This had been foretold many, many years before. David, speaking of Christ, had said, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots for my vesture." *Psalms* xxii. 18. Many of the psalms are prophecies of the sufferings and death of Christ.

Then the soldiers sat down near the cross, and watched Him there. What a sad sight it was! The holy Jesus, who had never done any wrong, hanging upon the cross in pain and sorrow; and His cruel enemies mocking Him, and reviling Him! Those hard-hearted men cared nothing for the sufferings of Jesus; yet He cared for them; He pitied them, and prayed for them,

even on the cross. He cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And we may be sure that the prayer of Jesus was not in vain. It was heard and answered. Many of those cruel murderers afterwards learnt to believe in Jesus; they asked to be washed from their sins in that blood which they had helped to shed; and they were pardoned, and saved, and now they are rejoicing with Jesus in Heaven.

Pilate wrote a title, and set it up over the cross—"This is Jesus, the king of the Jews." Pilate wrote it in mockery; and those who read it only laughed, and reviled Jesus the more. Yet the writing was true. Jesus *was* the king of the Jews. When the angel told Mary of His birth, he said, "God shall give Him the throne of His father David." The Jews indeed would not receive Him as their king; they said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." But a time is coming when they will receive Him. God says, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant (that is the Lord Jesus) shall be king over them; He shall be their prince for ever." *Ezek.* xxxvii. 23—25.

CCOXXVI.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

IT was nine o'clock in the morning, when Jesus was nailed to the cross; and He hung on it in agony till three in the afternoon, and then He died. Many wonderful things happened during these six hours.

Jesus was not crucified alone. Two men were crucified with Him; one on His right hand, the other on His left. These men were very unlike the blessed Jesus. They were thieves; wicked men who deserved to die. The prophet Isaiah had foretold, many years before, that Jesus would be put to death with wicked men: He had said of Him, "He made His grave with the wicked." "He was numbered with the transgressors." *Isaiah* liii. 9, 12.

These wicked men, while they were hanging upon the cross, reviled Jesus as the multitude around did. But at last, one of them, when he saw the meekness and patience of Jesus, and heard His words, and His prayers for His murderers, began to wonder very much, and feel as he never felt before. Perhaps this thief might long ago have heard of Jesus; perhaps he had been told of His miracles; and of all the things which Jesus had said and done. The thief did not believe in Jesus then. But now, when Jesus was dying, and when he himself was dying, he *did* believe. God, in

mercy, gave repentance and faith to that poor man, just before He died, that he might turn to Jesus, and be pardoned and saved. So this penitent thief, when he heard the other thief reviling and blaspheming, spoke to him, and said, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we are condemned justly; for we receive the just punishment of our sins; but this man has done nothing amiss." And then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." But could Jesus attend to the dying prayer of such a wicked man? Yes; it was not too late, even then, for Jesus to have mercy on him, and save him. Jesus answered, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." How rejoiced the poor man was to hear Jesus say this! He was dying in very great pain; but he had no need for fear nor sorrow now, because Jesus had forgiven his sins, and promised that, when he died, his soul should go to Heaven, to be happy with Him for ever.

Were none of the disciples and friends of Jesus by Him now? Yes; John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," had followed his Master, and stood by His cross; and near him stood Mary the mother of Jesus, and a few others with her. When Jesus saw His mother and John standing so near Him, He spoke to them, and comforted them.

His own pain did not make Him forgetful of those He loved. He spoke first to His mother. He looked towards John, and said to her, "Woman, behold thy son." Then He spoke to John. He looked towards Mary, and said, "Behold thy mother." Jesus was going to be taken away from His mother. He knew how sorry she was to lose Him, and He would not leave her without comfort. He meant that John should take care of her, and be like a son to her, when her own son was gone. And John understood what his dear Master meant. So he gently took Mary, and led her away from the cross, and brought her to his own home, and took care of her.

It was noon. And now a wonderful darkness spread over all the land. This darkness lasted three hours. Jesus was still alive; but He did not speak all that time. He was suffering more than we can understand; more than any mere man ever could suffer. His body was in great pain; but this was not His worst suffering. He was suffering still more in His soul. Jesus was dying; dying for sinners. He had promised His Father to do this; and His Father was now putting upon Him the punishment due to the sins of the world. God had not forgotten His beloved Son; He had not ceased to love Him; but He did not smile upon Him, nor comfort Him now. Jesus was dying in agony, without any comfort from His heavenly Father; this was His worst suffering; and it made Him cry at last, in the bitterness of His soul, "My God, my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Then He said again, "I thirst." So one of the soldiers filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished;" and then He cried with a loud voice, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit;" and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.

Then the veil which hung before the holy of holies in the temple, was torn in two; and the earth shook, and the rocks rent, and the graves opened; and the bodies of many of the saints which slept, arose. And why was all this? Why did these wonders happen? Why did Nature thus feel this great event? Because Jesus was God. Every thing felt His power; and every thing trembled with fear and horror, when wicked men put to death the Lord of life and glory. The centurion, and those who were with him watching Jesus, felt this, and cried, "Truly this was the Son of God."

What did Jesus mean when He cried, "It is finished?" He meant that the great sacrifice was now offered up, of which all other sacrifices were types. Jesus was "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;" He had died; no more offerings for sin were needed now; they were "finished" for ever. And the work of our salvation was "finished" too. Christ had died, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God." 1 *Peter* iii. 18. He had thus made peace for us with His Father, and turned away His anger from us. Christ has "finished" all this for us. But when we read the beautiful story of His life and His death,



1



ENG. BY R. SEARS, N. Y.

THE CRUCIFIXION.

we must remember that all He has done and suffered will do us no good, if we do not believe on Him in our hearts. He died for all, but He will save only those who come to Him in faith. The Son of man was "lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." *John iii. 14, 15.*

CCCXXVII

JESUS BURIED.

IT was Friday when our Lord was crucified. The next day was the Sabbath; for the Jews kept holy the seventh day of the week, because on that day God rested from His work of creation. And the Sabbath after the crucifixion; happened to be a very great day among the Jews; because the feast of the Passover was at that time. So some of them went to Pilate, and asked them to let the bodies be taken down from the cross, that the Sabbath might not be dishonored, and that the law of Moses might not be broken. Then Pilate sent the soldiers to see if those who were crucified were yet dead, and to kill them if they were not. The two thieves were still living; and the soldiers broke their legs, and thus put them to death. But when the soldiers came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they did not break His legs. But one of them with a spear pierced His side, and there came out blood and water. These things, too, had been foretold by the prophets.

There was a rich man named Joseph, of the city of Arimathea. He had been some time a disciple

of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews; for his faith was at first very weak and small. But Joseph had prayed that His faith might be increased, and God had heard his prayer. And now, when Jesus and His disciples had so many enemies, Joseph, instead of being afraid, felt strong and full of courage. So he went boldly to Pilate, and asked leave to take away the body of Jesus. And Pilate gave him leave. Then Joseph went to the cross, and took down the body. There was another good man with Joseph. This man was Nicodemus, the fearful disciple who, at first, came to Jesus by night; but Nicodemus had now learnt, like Joseph, not to be afraid of confessing himself a disciple of Christ.

When the body was taken down from the cross, Joseph and Nicodemus wrapped it very carefully in linen, with spices, and carried it to a garden near the place of crucifixion, and laid it in a tomb which belonged to Joseph. The tomb was quite new; no dead body had ever been laid there before; and it was cut out of a rock. Another prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus was laid in the tomb of Joseph; that

he should be "with the rich in his death." *Isaiah* liii. 9.

There were others too who loved to honor the dead body of Jesus. These were the holy women who had followed Him to the cross. Now they followed Him to the

grave; and when they saw where he was laid, they went, and made ready spices and ointments to anoint his body. And then they "rested on the Sabbath-day, according to the commandment."

CCCXXVIII.

THE RESURRECTION.

JESUS had often told the people that He should die, and rise again the third day. But the Jews did not believe this: and even His own disciples did not understand what He meant. But the priests and Pharisees remembered the saying; and now that Jesus was dead, they came to Pilate, and said, "Sir, we remember that deceiver said, while he was alive, that after three days he would rise again. Now we are afraid that his disciples will go to the tomb secretly, by night, and steal the body away; and then they will pretend that he is risen from the dead, and persuade the people to believe in him. Do not let them do this. Command that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day." Pilate answered, "Go your way; set a watch at the sepulchre, and make it as sure as you can." So they went away, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch. These foolish men thought that they could thus keep the body of Jesus in the tomb. We shall soon see how vain all their hopes were.

As soon as the Sabbath was past, some of the good women who loved Jesus so much, bought spices, and went to the tomb to anoint His body. Two of these women were named Mary; the other was called Salome. It was very early in the morning when they set off;—just beginning to be light. As they walked along, they said to one another, "There is a great stone at the door of the sepulchre; how shall we roll it away?" But when they came nearer, they saw that the stone was rolled away; and the door was open.

How was this? Who had rolled away the stone? The angel of the Lord. The stone, and the seal, and the soldiers who watched by the tomb, had no power to keep Jesus within the tomb. As soon as the third day dawned, before the women could come to the sepulchre, there was a great earthquake, and an angel was sent down from Heaven, and he rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His face was like lightning, and His raiment was white as snow, and for fear of him the keepers shook, and became like dead

men. And Jesus rose, as He had said; and the prophecy was fulfilled, "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." *Ps. xvi. 10.*

Mary Magdalene was so astonished at what she saw, that she ran back, and told the disciples. But Salome and the other Mary stayed, and went into the sepulchre; and there they saw a young man clothed in a long white garment; and they were afraid. But he said to them, "Do not fear; you seek Jesus of Nazareth; He is not here, He is risen; see the place where they laid Him. Go, and tell His disciples, and Peter, that He is gone to Galilee; and there you shall see Him." Then the women went away quickly from the sepulchre; but they were so much frightened at all they had seen, that they could not speak to any one they met on the road.

Why was this message sent so particularly to Peter, as well as to the other disciples? Because Peter had sinned so greatly, that, perhaps, he might think he was now no longer to be called a disciple. But Peter had repented, and Jesus had forgiven him; and now this message was sent to comfort him, and to show him that Jesus remembered and loved him still.

Mary Magdalene had gone before to tell Peter and John. As soon as she saw them, she said, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him." For Mary Magdalene had not heard and seen what Salome and the other Mary had. Then Peter and John ran directly, both together, to the sepulchre. John ran faster than Peter, and came there first, and saw the

linen clothes lying; but he did not go in. Soon after, Peter came, and went in, and he too saw the linen clothes lying; and the napkin that had been about Jesus' head, folded together in a place by itself. There was no confusion, no disorder in the tomb; it did not look as if people had been there, and hastily stole away the body. When the disciples had thought a little upon these things, John also went into the sepulchre; and he saw and believed. Then the disciples went away again to their own home.

But Mary Magdalene still stayed outside the sepulchre, weeping. At last, she stooped down and looked in; and she saw two angels in white sitting there in the place where the body of Jesus had lain. Then the angels said to Mary, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She answered, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." As she said this, she turned round and saw some one standing by her. It was Jesus himself; but Mary did not know, at first, that it was Jesus. He spoke to her, and asked, "Why weepest thou?" Still Mary did not know Him; she thought it was the gardener who spoke to her; so she said, "Sir, if thou hast carried Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will go and take Him away." Jesus said to her again, "Mary!" Mary knew the voice, and turned round, and when she saw that it was really Jesus himself, she said, "Master!" Mary was so rejoiced to see Jesus, that she fell down to embrace His feet; but Jesus said "Do not touch me; do not stay to worship me now, but go

directly to my brethren, and tell them, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Then Mary went to tell the disciples. As she was going, she met Salome and the other Mary; and while they were all together, Jesus himself came to them, and said, "All hail!" Then they fell down and worshipped Him. Jesus said to them, "Be not afraid; go and tell my brethren to go into Galilee, and there they shall see me." So they went, and did as Jesus said.

As they were going, some of the soldiers, who had been watching at the tomb of Jesus, came to the priests, and told them the wonderful things which had happened. The priests were very much surprised to hear this. They must have felt that

Jesus had been raised by a miracle, and yet they would not believe in Him even now. And they determined to prevent the people too from believing on Him, if they could. So they consulted together what they should do; and then they called the soldiers, and gave them a large sum of money, and said, "You must not let the people know what has happened. You must say that the disciples came by night and stole away the body while you were asleep. And you need not be afraid; for we will speak to the governor for you, and take care that you are not punished." So the soldiers took the money, and promised to do as they were taught; and then they went away and told this wicked falsehood to all the people.

CCCXXIX.

THE WALK TO EMMANUS.



THE same day that Jesus rose from the tomb, two of the disciples went together to a village named Emmaus, not very far from Jerusalem. As they walked along, they talked of all the things that had just happened. They spoke of the death of Jesus, and of his burial; and they mourned very much because he was taken from them; for these disciples did not yet fully believe that Jesus was risen from the dead. As they talked in this way, some one came and joined

them. They thought he was a stranger; but he spoke very kindly to them, and asked, "What are you saying one to another, as you walk, and are sad?" Then one of them answered, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things done there in these days?" He asked again, "What things?" They said, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a great prophet before God and all the people. The priests and rulers condemned Him, and crucified Him. But we thought He had been the Redeemer

of Israel; and now this is the third day since these things happened. And some women of our company astonished us very much to-day. They went early to the sepulchre and could not find His body; and they came back, and told us they had seen some angels, who said He was alive. And then some more of us went to the sepulchre, and we found all as the women had said; but we did not see Jesus." Then the kind friend who was walking with the two disciples answered and said, "Why are you so foolish, and so slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken? Have you not read in the Scriptures that Christ must first suffer, and afterwards go into His glory?" And then this wonderful stranger began at the books of Moses, and explained to them in all the Scriptures, the things which were written of Christ. When we read the Old Testament History, we found a great deal there about the Lord Jesus. We were told about Him in the Garden of Eden, and many times afterwards. And the Psalms, and the prophets too, are full of prophecies about Him. All these things the kind stranger explained to the two disciples. As he talked to them, they felt that they had never before understood the Scriptures so clearly; and they began to be quite sure that Jesus was indeed the true Messiah, the Redeemer of Israel.

At last they came to Emmaus. It was now evening. Their kind friend was going to take leave of them; but they said, "No; do not go farther; it is late; come in, and stay with us." So he went in with them, and sat down to meat. As

they were eating, he took bread, and blessed it, and broke, and gave it to them. He did this just as Jesus used to do, when He ate with them, before His death. And now the disciples saw that this kind friend really was Jesus himself; "their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." How glad they were to see Him again! But Jesus did not stay longer with them. When the disciples looked again, He was gone; they knew not how, nor where. Then they rose up, and went to Jerusalem, and found the disciples, and said to them, "The Lord is risen indeed;" and they told them the things that had just happened, "and how He was known of them in breaking of bread."

While the two disciples were speaking, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said, "Peace be unto you." The disciples were frightened; but Jesus said again, "Why are you troubled? Behold my hands and my feet; see, it is I myself." And then He showed them His hands and His feet—those hands and feet which had been so cruelly nailed to the cross. The disciples could hardly believe for joy; but Jesus said again, "Have you any meat?" They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and a honey-comb; and He took it, and did eat before them. Then He said, "You remember what I told you before I died. I told you that all the Scripture has said of me must be fulfilled. It is written that Christ should suffer, and rise again the third day; and you see that so it is. Now go, and teach all nations what I have done to save sinners. Begin at Jerusalem; for the Jews must first have

the gospel preached to them; and then go to the Gentiles. Tell them to repent of their sins, and believe in me, that they may be saved. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

How happy the disciples were to see Jesus again, and to hear Him speak! And we shall soon see how willing they were to obey His command, and to go and preach the gospel to all nations. Christ's ministers are still obeying this com-

mand, when they go to heathen countries, and tell the people there to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved. We should pray for these holy men, and ask God to bless them, and prosper their work. The disciples were to begin preaching at Jerusalem. This shows us how much Jesus loved the Jews, and it should teach us to love them too, and seek to do them good; "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee." *Psalm cxxii. 6.*

CCOXXX.

THE UNBELIEVING DISCIPLE.



THOMAS was not with the other disciples when Jesus appeared to them; but when they next saw him, they told him the good news. They said, "We have seen the Lord." Was not Thomas very glad to hear this? He would have been if he had believed it; but he did not. He said, "No, it cannot be true. You must have been deceived. I will not believe that Jesus is risen, unless I see Him myself, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side."

Thomas was a good man, a true disciple of Jesus; but it was very wrong of him to be so unbelieving. If Thomas had searched the Scriptures, and prayed God to enable him to understand them, he would have found that Jesus must rise again; and then he would not have

disbelieved what the disciples told him.

Eight days passed away. They were happy days for the other disciples; for they believed that Jesus was risen indeed, and that made them rejoice. But they were very unhappy days for Thomas; for he did not believe, and therefore he could not share the joy. Thus he was punished for his unbelief. But Jesus knew all that was in the heart of Thomas, and pitied and loved him still. So one day, when all the disciples were together, and the doors were shut, Jesus came, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace be unto you." There was no need for Jesus to open the door, to come into the room. He had power to come and go as He pleased, in a wonderful way which we cannot understand; and He came now, that Thomas might see for himself,

and be quite sure that Jesus was risen from the dead. So Jesus called him, and said, "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and trust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing." Then Thomas saw that it was really Jesus, and he cried out in faith and joy, "My Lord, and my God!" Jesus said, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

We who are living now, "have

not seen" Jesus as Thomas did; but we may look upon Him by faith, and believe on Him in our hearts, though we cannot see Him with our eyes. And all will be truly "blessed," really happy, who thus believe in Jesus: "whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." 1 *Peter* i. 8, 9.

CCCXXXI.

PETER'S DEATH FORETOLD.



HE disciples came to Galilee, as Jesus told them. One night seven of them went to fish in the lake of Gennesaret, but they caught nothing. In the morning, Jesus came and stood upon the shore; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. So He called to them, and said, "Children, have ye any meat?" They answered, "No." Then He said again, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find." The disciples obeyed, and now they were not able to draw up the net for the multitude of fishes. When John saw this, he turned to Peter, and said, "It is the Lord!" Perhaps the multitude of fishes reminded John of that day when Jesus had first called him, and some others

of the disciples, and made them "fishers of men."

When Peter heard that it was the Lord, he threw himself into the sea, that he might go to Jesus directly; and the other disciples came in the ship, dragging the net full of great fishes; a hundred and fifty-three; yet the net was not broken, though there were so many. As soon as they were all come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. The disciples did not know how and whence all this food came; it was the kind care of Jesus that prepared it for them. Then He said, "Come and dine." So they sat down to meat.

After they had finished, Jesus called Peter, and said to him, "Simon, lovest thou me more than

these?" Peter answered, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Then Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Soon after, Jesus asked again, "Simon, lovest thou me?" And again Peter answered, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." Jesus asked the third time, "Simon, lovest thou me?" Peter now began to feel grieved. He thought to himself, "Does not Jesus believe me? Does He think that I do not really love Him?"

Peter had, a little time before, denied Jesus three times; perhaps this was why Jesus now asked him three times, "Lovest thou me?" Jesus had forgiven Peter, and washed away his sin; but He wished him to remember that sin, and to be humbled for it still. And, no doubt, Peter did remember it, and was very sorry that he had ever so wickedly denied his Master; yet he felt sure in his heart that he really loved Him, so he turned to Jesus, and said, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." And once more Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

What did this mean? Christ calls His people His sheep. Peter was to give spiritual food to those sheep. He was to go and preach the gospel to them. And Peter was to feed Christ's lambs too. They are the young, the little ones

of the flock. Jesus did not forget them. He loves to "gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom." *Isaiah xi. 11.*

There was great need for Peter to love Jesus with all his heart, for soon he would have to suffer and die for his Master's sake. Jesus told him this. He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young thou girdest thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not." What did this mean? Jesus said it, signifying by what death Peter should glorify God. When Peter was an old man, his enemies took him and bound him to a cross; and so he died for his Master's sake. This was a sad death; very painful, and very dreadful; but if Peter truly loved Jesus, he must be willing even to be crucified for His sake. So when Jesus had foretold this, He said, "Follow me." Peter must not deny his Saviour for fear of death; he must follow Him faithfully to the end, whatever that end might be. And so he did; and now Peter is with Jesus in Heaven, and he has received that "crown of life," which is promised to all those who are "faithful unto death." *Rev. ii. 10.*

CCCXXXII.

THE ASCENSION.



HOW long did Jesus stay on earth after He rose from the grave? Forty days. During that time He appeared very often to His disciples, and taught them many things, and gave them many commands. At last, the time came for Jesus to be taken from them, and to go up to Heaven. So He called them once more, and led them to Bethany, the little village of which we have read before, where Lazarus, and Martha, and Mary lived. Then Jesus lifted up His hands and blessed His disciples. And so it was, that, while He was blessing them, and talking to them, "He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." The disciples looked steadfastly towards Heaven, as He went up; and watched the bright cloud which hid Him from their eyes. It went up higher and higher, far above the blue sky, and then they saw it no more. Jesus was gone. He was gone into Heaven, to sit down on the right hand of His Father's throne. Were the disciples sorry? Perhaps they were sorry to lose the sight of that dear friend who had been with them so long. But they had much to comfort them still. They remembered what Jesus had said, "I go to prepare a place for you; and where I am, there you shall be also."

As the disciples were looking up towards Heaven, two angels, clothed in white, came and stood by them. And these angels spoke to them, and said, "Why do you stand looking up into Heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come, like as ye have seen Him go into Heaven." Then the disciples were comforted; and they returned to Jerusalem, there to wait for the promise of the Holy Ghost, as Jesus commanded them.

We have been reading a great deal about the life, and death, and resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus. Now all these things are very needful for us to know; because without them, we could not be saved. Jesus became man, lived, and died, and rose again, and ascended into Heaven, for us and for our salvation.

He was born into the world, that, as man He might obey all God's holy law, and so work out a perfect righteousness for us; that "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many might be made righteous;" *Rom. v. 19*; and "that He might leave us an example, that we should follow His steps." *1 Pet. ii. 21*.

He suffered and was tempted while He lived, that He might be able to feel for us in our sufferings

and temptations; that He might "be made like unto His brethren," and so be "a merciful and faithful high priest:" "for in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." *Heb.* ii. 18.

He died to bear the punishment of sin, which we deserved to bear; He died, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God." *1 Peter* iii. 18. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." *Is.* liii. 5.

He "was raised again for our justification;" *Rom.* iv. 25; to show that He was indeed the Son of God, and that He had power to conquer death and the grave; and to teach us too, that as He rose, so we shall rise also. "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." *1 Cor.* xv. 20. "If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, so them also which sleep in

Jesus, will God bring with Him." *1 Thess.* v. 14.

And Jesus ascended into Heaven to prepare a place there for His people, and to intercede for them before His Father's throne. "He ever liveth to make intercession for them." *Heb.* vii. 25. He "is even at the right hand of God, and also maketh intercession for us." *Rom.* viii. 34.

These are all very wonderful things. It is well to read of them, and know them; but we must remember that this will do us no good, unless we believe and feel them in our hearts. We must pray for true faith in the Son of God, that all our sins may be washed away in His blood; and that we may be justified by His righteousness, and sanctified by His Spirit; and then, when we die, we shall be taken to be with Him, where He is; and we shall behold His glory.

CCCCXXXIII.

THE NEW APOSTLE.



AFTER Jesus had ascended into Heaven, the disciples all returned to Jerusalem, to wait there for "the promise of the Father," as Jesus had told them. They used to meet together in an upper room, with Mary the mother of Jesus, and the other women, and many more who believed; and they spent their time in prayer and praise.

One day, when about a hundred and twenty of this happy company were gathered together, Peter stood up and spoke to them. He reminded them, that one of the twelve apostles was parted from them for ever:—the wicked Judas; and then he said, "Let us now choose from among the disciples, another man to take the place of Judas, and to be witness with us of the resurrection of Jesus." The disciples were all willing to do this; and they soon chose out two men, Joseph called Barsabas, and Matthias. But they would not them-

selves determine which of these two should be the apostle. They prayed to God, and asked Him to choose for them. They said, "Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all, show which of these two Thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship." Then they cast lots; and God made the lot fall upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the twelve apostles.

It was very right of the apostles to ask God to direct them in what they did. This is what we should always do, when we have any business or duty to perform. We are so ignorant, that we know not of ourselves what to do, nor how to do it aright; but if we ask God, He will give us holy wisdom to teach and direct us. St. James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." *James i. 5.*

CCCXXXIV.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

TEN days after the ascension, was the feast of Pentecost. We have read of this feast before. God commanded the Israelites to keep it, when He gave them the land of Canaan, so many years ago. It was kept in remembrance of the law being given on mount Sinai, fifty days after the children of Israel came out of Egypt. It was called, too, the feast of weeks, because it was seven weeks after the Passover.

A great many Jews were now gathered together at Jerusalem, to keep the feast of Pentecost. And many people of other nations were there too. These were Gentiles who had learnt to believe in the God of Israel, and to obey His laws. They were called proselytes. All these people assembled in one place, on the day of the feast. As they were sitting together, they suddenly heard a sound from Heaven, like a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house in which they were. And there appeared to them tongues of fire, which came and rested upon every one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and were enabled, by His power, to speak with "other tongues," in new languages which they had never heard before.

How very wonderful this was! Jesus was now fulfilling His promise; He was sending to them that Spirit whom He had told them before

He would send. We know how hard it is to learn a new language. We study it, perhaps, many months or years before we quite understand it, and can speak it. But the disciples, at the feast of Pentecost, had no need to learn the different languages which they then began to speak. In one moment, they knew them perfectly. And why was this? why did God give such wonderful power to his disciples at that time? Because God wished His gospel to be then made known in many parts of the world, and to nations who had never heard it before. Many people from those nations were at Jerusalem at this very time; but they all spoke languages quite different from the language which the disciples spoke. So God sent the Holy Ghost to give the disciples this miraculous power of speaking different tongues, that they might be able to make known at once, to all the strangers in Jerusalem, "the wonderful works of God."

All those people who came from other countries and heard the disciples speak in their own languages, were very much surprised. They said, "How is this? Are not these men Galileans? How is it they can speak to us in our own tongues?" But the Jews who did not understand the different languages spoken by the apostles, mocked, and said, "These men are full of new wine." But Peter stood up in the midst,

and said, "Ye men of Judæa, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, these wonderful things, which you now hear and see, are only the fulfilment of what God's prophet Joel foretold many years ago. He said that God would, in the last days, pour out His spirit upon His servants, and teach them to prophesy. And so it is. And now hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth came among you, and worked miracles, as you know. He was taken by wicked men, and crucified, and slain. But God raised Him up; and we are witnesses of His resurrection, and say to you, that He is the Son of God, the true Messiah. And now He is ascended up to Heaven; and it is He who has sent the Holy Ghost upon us, and given us this wonderful power of speaking which you have heard to-day."

Were the people willing to attend to Peter, and to believe what he said? Yes; they were so much struck with his words, that they cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter answered, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus

Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Then those who believed were baptized, as Christ had commanded. They were about three thousand.

God is not now pleased to give His people that wonderful power of speaking different tongues, and of working miracles, which He gave to the disciples at the day of Pentecost. Those gifts were very useful and necessary at that time, to enable the disciples to preach the gospel to many nations at once, and to make the people believe that what they preached was really true. But this is not so necessary now; for the Bible is printed in almost every language in the world, and people may read it for themselves; and many missionaries go out to teach it. But God does still give the Holy Spirit to all who ask Him, to renew and sanctify their hearts, to teach and comfort them, and to make them meet for Heaven. Let us pray, then, for this good gift, and say, "Lord, for Christ's sake, give us the Holy Spirit."

CCCXXXV.

THE LAME MAN HEALED.

QUENE day, Peter and John went to the temple to pray. A poor lame man lay at the Beautiful gate of the temple begging.

He had been lame all his life, and could do nothing for himself; so every day he was carried to the gate, and there he lay, asking money from those who went into the temple. When he saw Peter and John, he began to beg something from them; but they were poor men, and had no money to give. What did they do? Did they pass on, and take no notice of the poor lame man? No; Peter and John had learned from their Master, Jesus Christ, to be kind and pitiful, and to go about, as He did, "doing good." So they spoke to the beggar, and said, "Look on us." The poor man did so directly, hoping to receive some money from them. But Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, give I thee; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. Then Peter took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet became strong, and he stood up, and walked, and went into the temple with Peter and John, leaping and praising God.

All the people who saw this were very much astonished, and they ran to the disciples, greatly wondering. Then Peter said, "Why do you wonder at this? Do you think that

it is our power which has cured this lame man? No, it is not our power, it is the power of Jesus which has cured him; that same Jesus whom you denied and crucified. God raised Him from the dead; we are witnesses of this; and His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. And now repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; for God sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

As Peter was speaking, the priests, and the ruler of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them. These wicked men would not believe themselves, and they wished to prevent the people from believing, if they could. So they laid hold of the two disciples, and shut them up in prison. But God blessed what Peter had said; and many more of the people believed.

The next day, the rulers, and scribes, and priests, all came together; and they brought out Peter and John, and made them stand before them, and asked, "Tell us now, by what power have you cured this lame man?" Then Peter, being full of the Holy Ghost, spoke boldly, and said, "It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, that the man has been made whole; that same Jesus whom God raised from the dead; and we tell you plainly that there is salvation only in Him;

for there is no other name under Heaven given among men, by which we can be saved." Then the priests and rulers wondered very much at the boldness of Peter and John; for they saw that they were ignorant and unlearned men; and "they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus."

The priests and rulers wanted very much to punish Peter and John; but they could not at that time; for the man who had been healed was standing by, and all the people saw him, and believed in the miracle, and even the wicked priests themselves could not deny it; so they called the disciples again, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach, in the name of Jesus, and then let them go.

And did the disciples promise to obey the command? No; they would make no such promise. They said, "It is not right to attend to you more than to God. We must speak the things which we have seen and heard." Then their enemies threatened to punish them if they did so; but the disciples put their trust in God, and asked Him to give them strength to preach the

gospel without fear. And God heard their prayer, and filled them with holy boldness, and blessed their words to very many of the people.

We should learn, from these apostles, the duty of holy boldness for the sake of Christ. We are commanded in the Bible to be subject to "the higher powers," and this command we must remember and obey. But then, it may sometimes happen that earthly rulers order things which are contrary to God's word; just as those priests and rulers did of whom we have been reading; and just as, you remember, king Darius did, when he commanded the people not to pray for thirty days. And what would it be our duty to do then? We must, as the apostles did, and as Daniel did, obey God rather than man. But when we do this, we must do it in a spirit of love, and gentleness, and humility; because we wish to obey God, not because we wish to resist the lawful authority of man. And we must never forget to love even our enemies, to bless them that curse us, and to pray for them who despitefully use us, and persecute us.

CCCXXXVI.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.



HERE was now a large number of people in Jerusalem who believed in Jesus. These people all lived together in peace and love; and as some of them were rich, and others poor, those who were rich used to sell their possessions, and give the money to the apostles for their poor brethren. They were not commanded to do this; they did it of their own free will.

But there were two persons among them, who were very different from the rest. Like Judas, they professed to love Jesus, but did not really love him. These persons were a man named Ananias, and his wife whose name was Sapphira. When so many of the Christians sold their possessions, and gave the money to the apostles, Ananias and Sapphira thought they would do so too; for they wanted to be thought very good and holy. So they sold some land which they had, and received a sum of money for it.

And then did they take the money to the apostles? They took a part only. They did not wish to give away all the money, yet they wanted people to think that they did. So they determined to do a very wicked thing;—to try to deceive the apostles. They kept back part of the money; and the rest Ananias brought and laid at the apostles' feet. Peter

knew what the real truth was; for God had told him by the Spirit; so he looked at Ananias, and said, "Why has Satan filled thine heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the money? The possession was thine own before it was sold; and after it was sold, the money was in thine own power; there was no command given to sell the possession, or to bring the money to us. Why hast thou done this? Thou hast not lied to men, but to God." And as Peter said this, God himself smote Ananias, and he fell down, and died directly; and some young men came, and carried out the body, and buried it.

Three hours after, Sapphira came in, not knowing what had happened to her poor wicked husband. Then Peter spoke to her, and said, "Tell me, did you sell the land for so much?" Sapphira answered, "Yes, for so much." Then Peter said again, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Those who buried thy husband are now at the door, and shall carry thee out." Then Sapphira fell down and died; and the young men came in, and found her dead, and carried her out, and buried her by her husband. Their bodies lay side by side in the grave: where did their souls go? We know where the Bible says all liars must go;—to that dreadful place where

Satan is, who is "the father of lies;" far away from the God of truth and holiness.

See what a dreadful sin lying is. It is a sin which God very often punishes in this world; if not repented of and pardoned, He will surely punish it in the next world. God hates lying. "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord." *Prov. xii. 22.* And not lying lips only

make God angry, but deceit, and slyness, and cunning too. We may *act* a lie, without *telling* a lie. Trying to deceive in any way is like lying, and quite as wicked in the sight of God. Pray that you may always speak the truth, and be open and sincere in every thing you do. Say, as David did, "Remove from me the way of lying." *Psal. cxix. 29.*

CCCXXXVII.

THE APOSTLES PERSECUTED.



THE apostles now went about preaching the gospel, and healing the sick, in the name and by the power of Jesus. When their enemies saw that they had not attended to the command given them, they became very angry again, and laid hold of the apostles, and put them into prison. But these wicked men were not able to hurt the apostles at that time; for God sent an angel by night to open the prison door, and bring out His servants. And then God commanded them, by His angel, to go into the temple, and preach the gospel again to the people there. So the apostles obeyed, and went into the temple, and taught.

The next morning, the priests, not knowing what was done, sent the prison to bring out the apostles. The messengers soon returned in great wonder, and said,

"We found the prison safely shut, and the keepers standing before the doors; but when we went in, we saw no man. The prisoners were gone." Then the priests began to wonder how this could be. But soon some one came in, and said, "We have seen these men whom ye put in prison. They are now standing quietly in the temple, teaching the people." Then the ruler of the temple, and the officers, went and brought out the apostles.

When they came in, the priest spoke very harshly to them, and said, "Did we not command you to teach no more in the name of Jesus? yet ye have disobeyed our command, and preached to all the people in Jerusalem." Then the apostles answered, "We ought to obey God more than man. God raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged upon the cross. He raised him to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of

sins. And we are His witnesses; for we have seen all these things, and we must tell them to the people, because God has commanded us so to do." Then those that heard what the apostles said, grew very angry, and wished to kill them. But there was a Pharisee in the council, named Gamaliel, a learned man, who was honored very much among the people. Gamaliel hated the apostles, and the gospel they preached, as much as the priests and Sadducees did; but he was wiser and calmer than they. So he commanded that the apostles should be put out for a little time, and then he said, "Ye men of Israel, take care what you do to these men. I advise you to be quiet, and to let them alone. If what they preach be false, it will soon come to nothing; and then we need not trouble ourselves about it. But if it be true, if it be of God, it must prosper, and we cannot overthrow it. If we try to do so, we shall only be found to fight against God." All the council were pleased

with what Gamaliel said. So they called back the apostles, and beat them, and commanded them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then let them go.

The apostles bore this cruelty with patience; for they remembered the holy lessons which Jesus had given them about loving their enemies; and His example too, when He suffered so meekly before Pilate and Herod. They even rejoiced that they were allowed to suffer shame for their Saviour's sake. So they went away; and taught and preached Jesus Christ daily, in the temple, and from house to house.

This is another example for us of holy boldness, and patience, and diligence in doing God's work. We should imitate the apostles, as far as we can, in all these Christian graces, and be thankful that we live in a time when people may hear and speak of Jesus without fear of persecution such as these holy men had to endure.

CCCCXXVIII.

THE FIRST MARTYR.



IN those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, the apostles had much to do, not only in preaching the gospel, but in other things also. At last they found all this work too much for them; they had not time and strength for it. So they called the disciples, and told them to choose from among themselves seven wise and holy men, who might help them in small things; and then the apostles said, "We will give ourselves to prayer, and the ministry of the word." This saying pleased all the disciples; they were willing to help the apostles, and thus to give them more time for prayer and preaching; so they chose out seven faithful and holy men. The names of these men were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. Then they brought them to the apostles, who prayed, and laid their hands upon them, and set them apart for the service of God. These seven men were called deacons. Their business was to attend particularly to the poor widows; and also to collect money, and distribute to those who were in need.

God still blessed His word more and more; and a great number, even of the priests, "became obedient to the faith." At last, some of their enemies began to trouble the servants of God. Whenever God's people are busy in making known

the gospel, Satan is busy too among his servants, stirring them up to resist the truth, and fight against it; and so it was now.

These wicked men were very angry with Stephen, one of the seven deacons, for he was full of faith and power, and did great wonders and miracles among the people. So they falsely accused him of speaking against Moses and against God; and then they caught him, and brought him before the council, and said, "We have heard him say, that Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

All this time Stephen stood calmly before his enemies. He looked so holy and so gentle, that those who gazed at him saw his face "as it had been the face of an angel."

At last, the high priest spoke to Stephen, and asked, "Are these things so?" Then Stephen began to defend himself, but he did this very wisely and gently. First, he reminded his enemies of their own past history. He told them of Abraham,—of God's command to him to go into the land of Canaan, and of Abraham's faith and obedience. Then he spoke of the sufferings of the people of Israel in Egypt, for 400 years, as God had said, and of their deliverance by Moses. He reminded them of all the wonders God did for His people in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, by the

hand of Moses. Stephen was accused of speaking against Moses; but he showed, in his defence, that this accusation was untrue, and that he loved and honored him very much as God's faithful servant. Then Stephen told them that Moses himself had prophesied of Christ, of that Saviour whom they rejected. The prophecy was this: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken." *Deut. xviii. 15.* This prophet was the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Then Stephen spoke of the disobedience of the Israelites, and of the punishments with which they were threatened. And he told them of the tabernacle which was built for God's service in the wilderness, and of the temple which was afterwards built at Jerusalem by king Solomon. But Stephen said, "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, 'Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord; or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?'"

Stephen had now answered the false accusations of his enemies. He had shown them that he did not speak against Moses and against God; but that he loved and feared God, and honored Moses His servant. He had told them about the tabernacle in the wilderness, and about the temple at Jerusalem; and perhaps he wished now to explain to them, how the services of the tabernacle and the temple, the sacrifices and the ceremonies, were done away in Christ, the Prophet of whom Moses had spoken. And then he

would have warned them of the destruction which must come upon them if they rejected that Prophet; and this would have explained the meaning of the words he was accused of saying:—"Jesus shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us."

But the enemies of Stephen were beginning to be impatient, so he hastened to the end of his speech. He wished to make them feel their great wickedness, and he spoke to them very solemnly indeed. He said, "Your fathers persecuted the prophets who foretold the coming of Christ; and you have betrayed and murdered that Just One." When they heard this, they grew very angry, and gnashed on Stephen with their teeth. But he was still calm and gentle; and being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up to Heaven, and saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God. That Jesus who had Himself suffered so much, was now looking down in love upon His faithful servant, to comfort him in his sufferings. Then Stephen said, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." But his enemies would not attend to what he said. They cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him. Then Stephen called upon God, and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord I lay not this sin to their charge." And when he had said this, "he fell asleep."

So Stephen died; but the Bible does not say he "died;" it only says

he "fell asleep." His death was so happy, so peaceful, that it was not like death; it was like calm and quiet sleep. Yet Stephen died in great pain. What could make him forget the pain, and "fall asleep" so peacefully? The sight of his Saviour standing at God's right hand to take him up to Heaven. That sight was so bright and glorious, that it made Stephen forget all the pain of his cruel death, and all the rage of his wicked murderers. And Stephen's heart was so full of holy love, that he could pray for his enemies, even when they were throwing stones upon him to kill him. He remembered the example of his Saviour who, when on the cross, cried, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

Stephen is called the first martyr. He was the first who suffered death for the sake of Christ. There have been many martyrs since Stephen died. First, the apostles; then the early Christians; and very many more in after times. There have been martyrs even in

Christian countries. Good men and women have been persecuted unto prison and death, because they would not conform to the errors and delusions of bigoted, cruel men, and tyrannical rulers. And where are all these holy martyrs now? They are happy with Jesus, and will be so for ever. "They have come out of great tribulation," and now they are "before the throne of God," and He "shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." *Rev. vii. 14.*

We should be thankful that we do not live in a time when people are put to death for believing the truth, and for serving the Lord Jesus Christ. But we ought to pray too, for the spirit of these holy martyrs; that if ever we should be called upon to suffer for the sake of Christ, we may be enabled to do so with their faith, and love, and boldness; remembering that if we thus suffer with Christ, "we shall also reign with Him." *2 Tim. ii. 12.*

CCCXXXIX.

SIMON THE SORCERER.



AMONG the enemies of Stephen was a young man, named Saul. He was willing that Stephen should be put to death; he consented to it, and "kept the raiment of them that slew him." This Saul was first a persecutor, and afterwards a preacher of the gospel. We shall soon read a great deal about him.

The disciples took the dead body of Stephen, and carried it to the grave, and wept over it. It was a time of great sorrow and trouble; for the enemies of Jesus, particularly Saul, were now persecuting the Christians very cruelly; and a great many of these Christians were driven far away from Jerusalem. But God turned all this to His own glory; for those who were scattered abroad, went everywhere, preaching the gospel.

Philip, one of the seven deacons of whom we read before, went to Samaria, and preached Christ to the people there. And he worked miracles among them, healing the sick, and casting out devils; and many of the people believed, and there was great joy in all the city.

There was living at Samaria, at that time, a man named Simon. This man was a sorcerer, or magician. He told the people that he was very great and powerful, and pretended to work miracles among them, and to do wonders, as, you

remember, the wicked magicians in Egypt once did in the time of Moses. Simon deceived the people of Samaria for a long time; so that they all attended to him, saying, "This man is the great power of God." But when these people believed what Philip preached, they attended to Simon no more; but were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. At last, Simon himself believed, and was baptized; and he stayed with Philip, wondering at the miracles and signs that were done. But Simon was not a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He believed with his understanding only, not with his heart; and this is not true faith in the sight of God. But Philip could not see the heart; so he hoped that Simon was sincere, as he professed to be.

When the apostles at Jerusalem heard of what had been done among the people of Samaria, they sent to them Peter and John. Then these apostles prayed that the disciples in Samaria might receive the Holy Ghost, as those in Jerusalem had; and they laid their hands on them; and God heard their prayer, and answered it. When Simon saw that the Holy Ghost was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he went to Peter and John, and offered them money, and said, "Give me this power, that I may give the Holy Ghost to those on whom I lay my hands. Simon did

not understand that the Holy Ghost was the gift of God alone; and he wished to have the power which the apostles had, only that he might be more honored by the people; for Simon was a very ambitious man, and very fond of power. But Peter was taught by God to know the wicked thoughts which were in Simon's heart; so he answered, "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought the gift of God can be bought with money. Thou hast nothing to do with such holy things as these; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. And now, repent of this wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." Then Simon answered, "Pray ye to the Lord for me," for he began now to feel frightened, and well he might, at what Peter said.

We read no more about Simon. We may hope that he did as Peter advised him; that he prayed for pardon; and if he did so sincerely, and with all his heart, no doubt his prayer was heard, and his sin pardoned; for God is ready to forgive

the greatest sinners who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

This story teaches us a very solemn lesson. It shows us that people may be baptized, as Simon was, and that they may profess to believe the gospel, as he did, while their hearts are not "right in the sight of God." And such people may deceive their fellow-creatures, as Simon deceived Philip and the Samaritans, for a time. But God cannot be deceived. He sees every thought of the heart; and all deceit and hypocrisy will be made known "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to the gospel." *Romans* ii. 16. How fearful it will be in that day, for all whose hearts are "not right in the sight of God!"

Then let us pray now, that our hearts may be made new and clean by the Holy Spirit, and each say, as David did, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." *Psalms* cxxxix. 23, 24.

CCCXL

PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH.

THE apostles now returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

Then an angel of the Lord came to Philip, and said, "Arise, and go to the south, unto the way that goeth from Jerusalem to Gaza, which is desert."

Why was Philip to go there? What could he do in a desert where no people were living? Philip did not know; but as soon as the command was given him, he obeyed, without asking "why." Philip knew that God was wiser than he; and that every command of God is right and good; so he obeyed in faith. God had a very particular reason for sending Philip to the desert just at this time; we shall soon see what it was.

There was a country called Ethiopia, south of Egypt, and a queen ruled over it called Candace. Candace had a eunuch, or officer, who took care of all her treasures, and was very useful to her in her kingdom. This man was a Jewish proselyte; that is, he had learnt to believe in the God of Israel, and to attend to the law of Moses. So this eunuch used to go sometimes to worship, and keep the feasts at Jerusalem. It happened that he had been to Jerusalem a little time before; and now he was returning to Ethiopia across the desert, just when Philip was

sent there. The eunuch was travelling in his chariot, and as he rode along, he was not idle; he had a book with him which he was reading very attentively. Perhaps he was reading it aloud to his friends and servants who were travelling with him. What book was he reading? The best book that any one can read;—the holy Scriptures.

Then the Spirit of God said to Philip, "Go, and join thyself to the chariot." So Philip ran directly to the chariot; and when he came nearer, he heard the words which the eunuch was reading, and spoke to him, and asked, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" The eunuch answered, "How can I, except some man should teach me?" And then he asked Philip to come and sit with him in the chariot, and explain what he was reading. So Philip did as the eunuch wished.

The place of the Scripture which he read was this: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before the shearer, so opened he not his mouth." These words were written by Isaiah many years before. They were a prophecy of Jesus Christ; but the eunuch did not know this; so he said to Philip, "I pray thee, of whom did the prophet speak this? of himself, or of some other man?" Then Philip began at that very text, and preached unto him Jesus. He told

him that these words were spoken of the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," of the Lord Jesus Christ who was slain for us, and whose blood "cleanseth from all sin."

The eunuch liked to hear Philip talk; and Philip was willing to answer his questions, and explain his difficulties. And God blessed what Philip said, and the eunuch believed in Jesus Christ, as the true Messiah, the Saviour of sinners.

At last they came to some water. Then the eunuch said to Philip, "See, here is water; may I be baptized?" For the eunuch wished to obey the command of that Saviour in whom he now believed. Philip answered, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." The eunuch said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And no doubt the confession came from his heart, and not from his lips only; for this eunuch was a true believer, and not a mere professor like Simon the sorcerer.

Then the chariot was stopped; and they both went down into the water, and Philip baptized the eunuch. But as soon as they came out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, in a wonderful way which we cannot understand, and brought him to a place many miles off, where there was more holy work for Philip to do.

But what became of the eunuch after Philip was gone? He went on his way rejoicing. He had much to make him rejoice. He had learnt

to believe in Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners; and he had a good hope that, when he died, he should go to that Saviour, and be with Him for ever. He and Philip never met again on earth, but they have long ago met in Heaven; and Philip knows now why he was sent so far off to the desert, and rejoices that he obeyed the command.

And what may we learn from this story? We may learn the duty and blessing of searching the Scriptures, and of seeking and praying to understand them. It was when the eunuch was diligently studying Isaiah the prophet, that Philip was sent to "preach unto him Jesus." And Christ says to us, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they testify of Me." *John* v. 39. But, like the eunuch, we cannot always understand what we read, without some one to teach us. How thankful we ought to be, then, for wise and holy ministers of God's word, who are willing and able to explain it. But we must remember, that the teaching of man alone will do us no real good. We should pray to be taught of the Spirit. He is the best teacher; and we must ask Him "to take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us." Then we shall rightly understand the Scriptures, not only with our heads, but with our hearts; and find them able to make us "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." *2 Tim.* iii. 15.

CCCXII.

SAUL OF TARSUS.



WE are now going to read a very wonderful story about the cruel persecutor Saul, who had driven away so many Christians from Jerusalem.

Saul was a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin. He was born at Tarsus in Cilicia, and brought up in Jerusalem by Gamaliel, the learned Jew of whom we have heard before. Saul was very learned, like his master; and like him, too, he was a Pharisee, and very particular in keeping the law of Moses. And because of all this, Saul thought himself very righteous and good; too good to need a Saviour; for he did not then know the sinfulness of his own heart, nor feel the truth of the text which says, "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." *Eccles. vii. 20.* So when Saul first heard of Jesus of Nazareth, instead of believing on Him as the true Messiah, he despised, and rejected, and hated Him. And when some of the people began to believe the Gospel, Saul hated and persecuted them, because they loved Christ. He even thought it was his duty to do this, and to try to prevent them from believing in the Lord Jesus. How ignorant Saul was then! And so are all who have not been taught, by the Holy Spirit, to feel themselves sinners, and to go to Christ for salvation. After persecuting

the Christians in Jerusalem, Saul determined to prosecute them in other cities also. So he went to the high-priest, and asked for letters to the rulers of the synagogues in Damascus, giving him leave, if he found there any disciples of the Lord, to bring them bound to Jerusalem. Then the high-priest gave him letters, and Saul set off to Damascus.

But as he journeyed, and came near to Damascus, there suddenly shone round about him a light from Heaven; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" Then Saul cried, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the voice said again, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest."

It was the same Jesus whom Saul had despised, and whose disciples he had persecuted, who was now calling to him. But why did Jesus say that Saul persecuted *Him*? Because Jesus regards His people as Himself. He says, he that toucheth them, "toucheth the apple of His eye." *Zec. ii. 8.*

But Saul did not despise Jesus now. The voice came with power to his heart, and conquered and subdued it; and Saul cried humbly, as he had never done before, "Lord! what wilt Thou have me to do?" The Lord answered, "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." Then Saul

arose; but he was not able to see, for the bright light had taken away his sight; so those who were with him led him by the hand, and brought him to Damascus.

Saul was three days at Damascus, without eating or drinking; and he was blind too, all that time. Yet all was sent in mercy to Saul, to bring him to repentance. As he sat alone, blind and unhappy, he thought of his past life; and he felt, for the first time, that he was a sinner before God; and then he began to pray for pardon. And did God hear his prayer? Yes; God had been looking upon Saul all this time; and as soon as Saul began really to pray, God heard and answered him.

There was a disciple living at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord appeared to this good man in a vision, and said, "Ananias, arise, and go into the street called Straight, and ask in the house of Judas, for a man named Saul of Tarsus; for, behold, he prayeth. And he has seen thee, in a vision, coming in, and putting thine hand upon him, that he may receive sight." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard of this man before, and how much evil he has done to Thy disciples in Jerusalem. And now he is come here with power from the priests, to bind all those who call upon Thy name." Ananias did not believe, at first, that this Saul could be really humble and penitent; and perhaps he felt afraid to go to him. But God taught Ananias that He had power to soften the hardest heart: He said, "Go thy way;

for I have chosen Saul to preach My Gospel to the Gentiles, and to kings, and to the children of Israel; and he shall suffer many things for my name's sake." Then Ananias obeyed directly. He went into the street called Straight, and to the house of Judas, and there he asked for Saul of Tarsus. Then Ananias went into the room where Saul was, and laid his hands upon him, and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to thee in the way, has sent me that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." And immediately he received sight, and arose, and was baptized. Then he ate some meat and was strengthened; and he stayed with the disciples in Damascus, and preached Christ in the synagogues.

What wonderful power and mercy God showed in thus turning the heart of Saul of Tarsus! And God is still able and willing to soften the hardest hearts, and to pardon the greatest sinners who come to Him as Saul did, when God said of him, "Behold, he prayeth." Saul had often said prayers, as the Pharisees did, with his lips, "to be seen of men;" but he had never before prayed with his heart to God in secret; and therefore his prayers had never before been heard nor answered. Do you wish to be pardoned as Saul was? Then you must come to God as he did, when he was lying blind at Damascus, and as the poor publican did in the parable, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

CCCXLII.

DORCAS.



ABOUT this time, Peter went to a place called Lydda, to visit the disciples there. There was at Lydda a man named Eneas, who was sick of the palsy. He was so ill and weak, that he was not able to walk nor stand; and he had been in this sad state for a long time; he had kept his bed eight years. When Peter heard how ill Eneas was, he went to see him. This was very kind, and very right. We ought always to try to comfort our friends, when they are sick and in trouble. And, particularly, we should then try to speak to them of the Lord Jesus Christ; for He is the good physician, and the best friend in times of illness and sorrow.

So Peter came to Eneas, and spoke to him, and said, "Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed." And Eneas arose directly, and was well. It was Jesus, not Peter, that made Eneas well. Peter had no power in himself to work miracles; and he never wished people to think he had. He always told them that the wonders he did were done in Christ's name, and by Christ's power.

There was another person sick, at Joppa, not far from Lydda. This was a woman named Dorcas. Dorcas was a true disciple of the Lord Jesus; and she showed her love to him, by acts of love to His people. Perhaps she remembered those words which

Jesus said should be spoken to the righteous, at the day of judgment, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." *Matt. xxv. 40.*

What was it that Dorcas did? She visited the sick, and clothed the poor, and comforted those who were in trouble. She tried to follow the example of her Saviour, who "went about doing good." But Dorcas was not proud of what she did. She did not think that any good or kind thing she could do would take her to Heaven. No; she felt she was a poor sinner; and she came to Jesus for pardon every day she lived; and trusted to His righteousness, not to her own, for salvation.

But, at last, it pleased God to send pain and sickness upon Dorcas. She became very ill, and grew worse and worse; and, after a little time, she died. It was a sad day at Joppa, when Dorcas died. The poor, and the sick, and the sorrowful, felt what a kind friend they had lost; they thought, "Dorcas is dead; she will never come to see us and comfort us any more." And then they began to weep very bitterly.

But some of the disciples at Joppa remembered that Peter was not far off; and they sent two men to ask him to come and comfort them. So Peter arose directly, and went to Joppa. Then they led him to the house where Dorcas had lived, and

brought him into the upper room, where the body lay. The friends of Dorcas were there weeping, and among them were many poor widows whom she had clothed; and they were showing, one to another, the coats and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter sent them all away; for he wanted to be alone; and then he knelt down, and prayed. He prayed that God would, in His mercy, raise Dorcas to life again; and then Peter turned to the dead body, and said, "Dorcas, arise." And God heard and answered Peter's prayer, and made Dorcas live again; and she opened her eyes; and, when she saw Peter, she sat up. Then Peter called the widows, and the friends of Dorcas, and showed her to them alive and well. How rejoiced they all were! How thankful to God, who had given them their dear friend once more!

We should try to follow the ex-

ample of Dorcas; to love Jesus, and to show our love to him, as she did. Dorcas was humble, and diligent, and always ready to do good; and we should pray to be so too. There is much for us all to do; and, if we really love Jesus, we shall not be selfish and idle, but active and diligent in his service; we shall try, if we can, to be useful to others, and not live only to ourselves. The Bible tells us, "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction." *James i. 27.* This was what Dorcas did, and it is what Christian women now may do. And if they do it for the sake of Christ, He will not despise their "work of faith, and labor of love," though humble; but He will say of each, what He said of Mary, when she anointed His feet, to show her love to Him, "She hath done what she could." *Mark xiv. 8.*

CCCXLIII.

CORNELIUS.



AFTER Saul had become a believer in the Lord Jesus, he went from Damascus to Arabia, and stayed there some time. After this, he went back to Damascus, and preached so boldly to the Jews there, that he made them all very angry, and they tried to kill him. Night and day they watched by the gates, to lay hold of him, if they could. But Saul, and the disciples at Damascus, knew what these Jews were trying to do; so the disciples took care of him, and let him down from a window, secretly, by night, and sent him away to Jerusalem.

But when Saul was come to Jerusalem, the disciples there were all afraid of him. Why? Because they did not believe he was really a disciple. They remembered how he had persecuted them in times past, and they could not believe, at first, that he now really loved Jesus. But a good man, named Barnabas, took him, and brought him to the apostles, and told them how he had seen the Lord in the way; and that He had spoken to him; and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. Then the apostles believed that Saul was really a disciple, and gladly received him among them. There was no unkind feeling in the apostles; they only wanted to be quite sure that Saul was a Christian; and then they were rejoiced to forgive all his past

unkindness and persecution. So Saul stayed and preached at Jerusalem, till his enemies sought to kill him; and then the brethren sent him away to Tarsus.

There was living at this time in Cesarea a centurion named Cornelius. This centurion loved and served God. He did not yet know very much of holy things; but he wished to know more, and prayed daily to be taught. Now the Bible tells us, that if any man will do the will of God, "he shall know of the doctrine;" and so it was with Cornelius.

One day, an angel appeared to the centurion in a vision, and called him, and said, "Cornelius." Cornelius looked upon the angel, and was afraid, and asked, "What is it, Lord?" The angel answered, "Thy prayers are heard; they are come up for a memorial before God. And now send to Joppa, and call for a man there named Simon Peter. He is lodging with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea-side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."

What a wonderful vision this was! Did Cornelius attend to it? Yes; as soon as the angel was gone, he called two of his servants, and a soldier, a good man who always waited on Cornelius, and told them what he had seen, and sent them to Joppa to fetch Peter. But as Peter did not know Cornelius, might he

not be unwilling or afraid to go to him? Yes; but God had prepared Peter for what he was to do, by a vision as wonderful as that which Cornelius saw. The very day that the messengers set off on their journey, Peter, who was now at Joppa, went on the house-top to pray. While there, he became very hungry, and asked for food; but before the food could be made ready for him, he fell into a trance—a kind of vision or dream. He thought he saw Heaven open, and a vessel coming down to him, like a great sheet, knit at the four corners. In this vessel were all kinds of animals; wild beasts and tame beasts, and creeping things, and birds of the air. Then Peter heard a voice saying to him, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat." But Peter answered, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything common or unclean." The voice said again, "What God has cleansed, call not thou common." This was done three times; and then the vessel was taken up again into Heaven; and Peter awoke.

While Peter was wondering what this vision could mean, and why it was sent, the messengers of Cornelius came to the gate, and asked if Simon Peter lodged in that house. Just at that moment the Spirit said to Peter, "Three men are seeking thee; go with them, and fear not; for I have sent them." So Peter went down, and met them at the gate, and said, "I am the man you seek. Tell me, why are you come?" They answered, "We are come from Cornelius, the centurion. He is a just man, and fears God; and he has been warned by an angel

to send for thee. Then Peter called the messengers into the house, and lodged them that night; and the next day he went with them to Cesarea.

Cornelius was very anxiously waiting to see Peter. He called together a great many of his friends and neighbors, and told them all to come and hear the words which Peter would have to say to them. Then as soon as he saw Peter coming with the messengers, he ran out to meet him, and fell down, and worshipped him. But Peter said, "Stand up; I myself also am a man." Peter did not want more honor than was due to him. It is not right to worship any created being; neither a man nor an angel. Worship belongs to God, and to God alone.

So Cornelius brought Peter into the house where all his friends were gathered together, waiting. And now Peter began to understand what the vision meant, and why it had been sent just at that time. Cornelius and his friends were all Gentiles; and Peter, as a Jew, might think it unlawful to keep company with those of other nations; just as he thought it unlawful to eat certain things forbidden in the law of Moses. But God had taught Peter, by the vision, not to call anything common or unclean. Many of the strict ceremonial laws were done away, after Christ had come and fulfilled the law. The Jews might now eat what they pleased, and need not mind which animals were clean, and which were unclean. And so, too, there was now to be no distinction between Jews and Gentiles; "for there is no respect of persons with

God;" *Romans* ii. 11; "but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." *Acts* x. 35. All this came into the mind of Peter; and he told Cornelius the lesson God had taught him in the vision; and then he said, "Therefore I came to you as soon as I was sent for; and now I ask, why is it that ye have sent for me?" Then Cornelius answered, "Four days ago, I was praying in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, 'Cornelius, thy prayer is heard. And now send to Joppa, and bring here Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea-side. He shall come and speak to thee.' So I sent directly for thee, and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now, therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear the things that are commanded thee of God."

Then Peter opened his mouth, and preached to all the people in the house of Cornelius. He told them many things which they had not clearly understood before. He told them of Jesus of Nazareth, and how

God anointed him with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good; whom they slew, and hanged on a tree; and whom God raised up the third day. And then Peter said, "We are witnesses of these things; and he commanded us to go and preach to the people, and to say, that, through him, all who believe shall receive remission of sins." While Peter was speaking, the Holy Ghost came upon all who heard him; and they were enabled to speak with tongues, and glorify God. Then Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. And after this, he stayed with them many days.

There is much for us to learn from this story. It teaches us the blessing of seeking God, in truth and sincerity, as Cornelius did. It tells us that those who ask shall have, and that those who seek shall find. And it shows us how willing God is to save all who come to Him, through Jesus Christ, of whatever country they may be. We should be as willing to hear the gospel as Cornelius and his friends were; and let us pray God to bless it to our hearts, as He did to theirs.

CCCLIV.

THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.



ABOUT this time, Barnabas went to Tarsus, to seek for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch.

Saul and Barnabas stayed together at Antioch a whole year. They preached the gospel there; and many believed, and turned unto the Lord.

"The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." This was a new name then given to them; what did it mean? The word Christian means a follower of Christ; one who professes to be his servant, and to own Him for a Master. We who live in this country are called Christians. We profess to belong to His Church, His people, His family. But many people profess to be Christians, and are not really Christians. A real Christian loves the Saviour more than anything in the world; believes in Him with all his heart, and tries to please and honor Him in all he says and does. Those people, then, can-

not be true Christians, who love the world, and its follies, and vanities, and sins. They cannot be true Christians if they try to please themselves more than to please Christ, and if they seek their own honor more than His. It is a very awful thing to profess to belong to Christ, and yet in heart to be "none of His." At the day of judgment, Jesus will say to all such people, "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." *Matt. vii. 23.*

The early Christians at Antioch were really sincere; they truly loved Jesus, and showed their love by their kindness to their poor brethren. "The disciples determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea; which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul." This was a good way of showing their love to Jesus, for He Himself had said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." *John xiii. 35*

COCXLV.

PETER DELIVERED FROM PRISON.

CHRIST had told His disciples that they would have much to suffer for His sake; and now trouble and persecution had begun. About this time, Herod, king of Judea, grandson of the wicked Herod who killed the children at Bethlehem, stretched forth his hand to vex certain of the church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he determined to take Peter also. Peter was now at Jerusalem; so Herod sent, and took him, and put him into prison, and commanded a number of soldiers to keep him safely. Herod did not wish to put him to death directly; but he determined after Easter, to bring him out to the people, to be judged.

It was a sad time for the other disciples when Peter was in prison. They all loved him very much, and could not bear to be parted from him. And then they thought, perhaps, that they should never have him with them again. They had lost James; he had been cruelly killed; and they well knew that their enemies would kill Peter too, if they could. So they all felt very, very sad. Could they do nothing for him? Yes; there was one thing they could do. They could not take him out of prison, they could not save him from Herod's power: but they could pray for him,

and so they did. "Prayer was made without ceasing, of the church, unto God for him." This teaches us something. We may lose our friends; they may go far away from us; they may be in pain, and suffering, and trouble, and we may not be able to help and comfort them. But then we can pray for them. God can help them, though we cannot; and if He sees right, He will answer our prayers for them, as He did the prayers of the disciples for Peter.

One night, the night before Peter was to be brought out, he was sleeping in the prison, between two soldiers; he was bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison. How could Peter sleep? Was he not too anxious, too unhappy, to rest quietly? No; Peter could be peaceful and happy even in prison; he could sleep quietly though he expected to be brought before his enemies the next morning, and perhaps put to a cruel death. And why was he so calm and happy? Because he was at peace with God, through Jesus Christ. Peter was ready to die, and therefore he had no cause for fear.

While Peter was sleeping, suddenly, in the middle of the night, a light shone in the prison, and an angel of the Lord came, and smote him on the side, and said, "Arise up quickly." And immediately the chains fell off from Peter's hands

Then the angel said again, "Gird thyself, and put on thy sandals." And Peter did so. Once more, the angel said, "Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me." Then Peter arose, and followed the angel. They passed through the prison, but the soldiers did not awake; then they came to the door, but the keepers were still sleeping; so they went out, and came to the iron gate. How could they open the gate? Did the angel undo the lock, and move away the great bars? No, he had no need to do this; the gate opened of itself; for God made it open, that His servant Peter might be delivered. So Peter and the angel went through, and came into the city. Then they passed along one street, and, in a moment, the angel was gone.

All this was done so suddenly, and so quickly, that Peter hardly knew what had happened, but thought he saw a vision. But when he was come to himself, he said, "Now I know that the Lord has sent His angel, and delivered me out of the hand of Herod." So Peter, full of joy and thankfulness, went on, and came to the house of Mary, the mother of John, surnamed Mark, and knocked at the door. Were not all the people in the house asleep? No; though it was so late, they were awake; for they had a great work to do, and they could not rest till it was done. What was that work? It was prayer. They were all gathered together praying. Perhaps they were too busy with their daily duties to come together earlier; so these good people met in the night-time for prayer, and none of them complained of being too

tired and sleepy to attend to holy things. No; they all thought it was the best and happiest time of the day; for they had learnt to love the work of prayer and praise, better than any other work they had to do. They were praying, too, for Peter. They had not forgotten their dear friend who had been so long in prison. They prayed for him again and again; for though God did not answer their prayers directly, they felt quite sure that He would at last, when the right and best time came. And so He did. This very night, while they were praying, Peter came and knocked at the door.

A young maid, named Rhoda, went out to ask who was there; and when she heard Peter's voice answering, she was so glad, that, without opening the gate, she ran back, and told those in the house that Peter was come. But they would not believe it. They said, "No; it cannot be; thou art mad." But Rhoda told them she was quite sure that it was really Peter. All this time Peter stood knocking at the gate; so at last they opened it, and found, to their great joy, that Peter was there indeed. Then he told them how he had been delivered, and said, "Go, and show these things unto the brethren." So he left them, and went to another place, where he would be safe from his enemies.

In the morning, when the soldiers came to look for Peter, they were very much astonished not to find him; and no one knew how he had escaped, nor where he was. Herod sought for him a long time in vain; and then he became angry,

and commanded the keepers to be put to death. This was very unjust and cruel of Herod. The keepers were not to blame; but Herod was so angry that he did not care what cruel or unjust thing he did.

And now we come to the sad end of this wicked king. He was soon punished for all his crimes in a very dreadful way. Not long after Peter's escape, Herod was one day seated upon his throne in his palace at Cesarea, dressed in his royal garments. All his lords and his nobles were there, and Herod made a speech to them as they stood before him. Then they all gave a shout, and cried, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." But Herod did not

reprove them for this foolish and wicked flattery; he loved to hear himself praised, and to think of his power, and greatness, and riches; forgetting that it was God who had given him these things, and that He could, in one moment, take them all away. And God soon showed the people, and Herod himself too, how vain and foolish this flattery was. He showed them that this wicked king was not a god, but a weak, helpless man, unable to save himself from sickness and death when they came upon him. "The angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost."

CCCXLVI

PAUL THE APOSTLE.



SAUL and Barnabas went to Jerusalem, with the money sent from the Christians at Antioch; and when they had finished their work there, they returned to Antioch. Then they were told by the Holy Ghost to go and preach the gospel in other places; so after prayer for God's blessing, they left their friends at Antioch, and sailed to Cyprus.

There was living at Paphos, in Cyprus, a governor named Sergius Paulus. He was a Gentile; a wise man; and he showed that he had wisdom by wishing to hear the

apostles preach. He wanted to know the word of God. But there was a sad enemy of the gospel living at Paphos too. This was a man named Elymas; he was a sorcerer, or magician, and he not only hated the truth himself, but he wished to prevent Sergius Paulus also from believing it. But Saul, being filled with the Holy Ghost, and knowing the wickedness of Elymas, fixed his eyes upon him, and said, "O thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? Behold, now the hand of the Lord is

upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season." And as Saul said this, there fell a darkness upon Elymas, and he went about seeking some one to lead him by the hand. We do not read whether this wicked man ever repented of his great sin, and became willing to receive the gospel. But the governor Sergius Paulus, when he saw what was done, believed; and we may hope that he became a true disciple of the Lord Jesus. How dangerous it is to fight against God and His gospel! We have often seen this before. Many times we have read of wicked men trying to destroy the truth: but they never could, and they never will; for God is stronger than they, and His word must prosper at last.

Then Saul, who was now called Paul, left Paphos with his company, and went to Perga, and afterwards to Antioch; not the Antioch we read about before, but another Antioch, in Pisidia. There they went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down. After reading the law and the prophets, the ruler of the synagogue asked the apostles to preach to the people. So Paul stood up, and spoke to them for a long time about the history of Israel in past times, and particularly about king David. And then he told them of that Son of David, according to promise, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour. And he explained to them how Jesus came into the world, and died, and rose again, to save sinners who will believe in Him. Some of the people, particularly among the Gentiles, were willing to believe the

gospel; and they begged the apostles to preach the same things to them again; and the next Sabbath almost all the city came to hear the word of God. But many of the Jews were filled with envy and hatred, and could not bear to see the people coming to hear the gospel, and contradicted all that Paul and Barnabas said. Then the apostles spoke very faithfully and boldly to these unbelieving Jews, and said, "It was right that the word of God should be preached to you first, for this was the command of Christ; but as you have put it away from you, and are careless about everlasting life in heaven, we shall now leave you, and go to the Gentiles. For the Lord has commanded us also to make known His salvation to the ends of the earth."

When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and many of them believed; but the Jews raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them from the city. So the disciples left Antioch and went to Iconium. There again they were persecuted by Jews and Gentiles too; so they escaped to Derbe and Lystra, cities of Lycaonia.

How very sad all these stories are! They show us this truth, and a very awful truth it is,—that the natural heart is "enmity against God." *Romans* viii. 7. All our hearts are, by nature, like the hearts of these unbelieving, persecuting Jews and Gentiles. Let us pray then to be made "children of grace;" to be received into the family of Christ, and to become followers of God as His "dear children."

CCCXLVII.

P A U L A T L Y S T R A .



HERE was, at Lystra, a certain poor man who was a cripple, and had never been able to walk.

This man heard Paul speak, and believed; and when the apostle saw that he had faith to be healed, he said to him with a loud voice, "Stand up on thy feet." And immediately the cripple leaped up and walked. The people of Lystra were very much astonished when they saw this miracle. They knew that there could be no power in man to work such a miracle: yet they did not believe that it was done by the power of God, the true God; so they thought that Paul and Barnabas themselves must be gods, come down in the likeness of men; and they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius; for these were the names of two of the false gods which they worshipped. Then the priest of Jupiter brought oxen, and garlands of flowers, and wanted to offer sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas, as they did to their own idols. For these poor heathens knew nothing of that one great sacrifice which had been offered up, and which alone can take away the sin of the world.

When the apostles saw what the people were going to do, they were filled with horror, and rent their clothes, and ran in among the multitude, and cried, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We are not gods; we are men like yourselves; and we

come here to tell you to turn away from these vanities, and serve the living God." But the poor people would hardly be prevented from offering sacrifices to the apostles even then.

But some other people came to Lystra, very different from these ignorant idolaters. They were the persecuting Jews from Antioch and Iconium; and they soon persuaded the people of Lystra to try to kill the apostles, instead of sacrificing to them. So they stoned Paul, and drew him out of the city, thinking he was dead. But God preserved His faithful disciple for more usefulness, and suffering too, in His service; and as the disciples stood round Paul, he rose up and came into the city; and the next day he went with Barnabas to Derbe. And when they had preached the gospel there, they returned to Lystra, and Iconium, and Antioch; and spoke much to those who really believed in Jesus, and told them to be strong in faith to the end, and to bear patiently all they might have to suffer for Christ's sake; because "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Then they passed through Pisidia and Pamphylia, and at last sailed back again to Antioch in Syria, and told the Christians there all that God had done by them among the Gentiles. And there they abode a long time with the disciples.

How much these apostles did and

suffered in the cause of Christ! We may learn from them many a lesson of patience, and diligence, and love. The apostles had much tribulation to suffer. Pain, and persecution, and loss of all things; but they never complained nor murmured. They knew that "through much tribulation they were to enter into the kingdom of God;" and they were willing it should be so. And all God's people must suffer tribulation of some kind or other; not, perhaps, such as Paul and Barnabas suffered; but there are sorrows

and troubles for them all, before they can enter into the kingdom of God. But they do not murmur at this. They know that it is better "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." *Heb. xi. 25.* They know that their sorrows will soon end; and then they will go and join that happy company around the throne of God, "who have come out of great tribulation," and now stand before the Lamb, "clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." *Rev. vii. 9.*

CCOXLVIII.

THE PARTING OF PAUL AND BARNABAS.



WHEN the apostles had been some time at Antioch, Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." So they made ready to go. But before they began their journey they had a little disagreement, which ended in their parting one from the other, and going different ways.

This was very sad; how was it? When Paul and Barnabas travelled together before, they had taken with them John, whose surname was Mark, the nephew of Barnabas. But Mark grew tired of the work while they were in Pamphylia, and left them, and returned to Jerusa-

lem. This had displeased Paul very much; so now he thought it not right to take Mark with them again; but Barnabas was very anxious that he should go. Neither of them would give way to the other; so they determined to part. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and went through Syria and Cilicia.

This story teaches us how weak and sinful the best people are, even such holy men as Paul and Barnabas. How needful it is, then, to remember always Christ's warning to His disciples, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." *Mark xiv. 38.* No doubt Paul and Barnabas repented of their sin, and asked for pardon, and for grace to enable them to be more kind and forbear-

ing in future. This is what all real Christians do when they fall into sin; and they know where to go for pardon; for "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins." 1 *John* ii. 1, 2.

Paul spoke of Barnabas, and Mark too, in the epistles which he wrote afterwards; and he spoke of them

very kindly and affectionately. This shows that Paul and Barnabas soon forgot all their unkindness, and learnt to love one another as fellow-servants and disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. And let us learn too, to be kind and forbearing, "forgiving one another," even as we hope God, for Christ's sake, will forgive us.

OCCXLIX.

TIMOTHY.



WHEN Paul came to Lystra, he found a young disciple there named Timothy. The father of this young man was a Greek; but his mother was a Jewess, and a believer in Jesus Christ. Her name was Eunice. Timothy had another believing relation; this was his grandmother Lois. These two holy women had brought up young Timothy, as all really good parents and friends try to bring up children, "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." They taught him everything that was right and useful for him to know; but they remembered that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all true wisdom; and that was the wisdom which they were most anxious to teach Timothy; so "from a child" they instructed him in "the holy Scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 *Tim.* iii. 15.

It pleased God to bless this good teaching to young Timothy. He early learnt to know and love the Lord; and now, when Paul saw him at Lystra, he thought so well of him and loved him so much, that he determined to take him as his companion in his journeya. So Timothy was ordained a minister, and then went with Paul into many different countries. He afterwards became bishop of the Christian church at Ephesus. Paul loved Timothy as his son; and Timothy honored Paul as his father. Paul wrote two epistles to Timothy, and called him his "dearly-beloved son;" his "own son in the faith;" and he gave him much wise advice, and much encouragement, to strengthen him in the work he had to do.

Many children now are brought up as wisely and piously as young Timothy was by his good mother and grandmother. How thankful these children should be for all the good instruction they receive! How



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FROM A CHILD, THOU HAST KNOWN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

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attentive they ought to be to all the holy lessons given them! But then it will do children no good merely to know these things with their understandings, if they do not feel them in their hearts. And only the Holy Spirit can teach the heart. He it was who was Timothy's best teacher; who blessed the instructions of Lois and Eunice, and made Timothy really "wise unto salvation." Pray that you may be thus taught; and then, like Timothy; you will be useful while you live, and eternally happy when you die.

CCOL

PAUL AT PHILIPPI.



AUL and his companions went through Phrygia, and Galatia, and Mysia, and at last they came to Troas. A Christian church was formed in Galatia, to which Paul afterwards sent the epistle called "the epistle to the Galatians."

While Paul was at Troas, he saw, in a vision, a man of Macedonia, saying to him, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." As soon as Paul had seen this vision, he determined to go directly to Macedonia; for he knew the vision came from God, and that it was sent to tell him that there was work to do in Macedonia. So he took a ship, and sailed to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and then he came to Philippi, a chief city in Macedonia, peopled by Romans.

Paul and his friends stayed some days at Philippi; and on the Sabbath they went to the river's side, to a place where the people used to meet for prayer; and Paul sat down, and taught the women who came there. One of these women was

named Lydia. She was a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, and a worshipper of the true God. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things which Paul said; and she became a believer in Christ, and was baptized. Lydia was so thankful to the apostles for their instruction, that she begged them to come into her house, and stay there.

People may hear the gospel preached to them, but they will never be the better for it, unless God opens their hearts, as He did Lydia's. All our hearts are by nature shut against the truth; and therefore, whenever we read or hear the Scriptures, we should pray, "Lord, open our hearts, that we may understand and receive Thy word."

There was another person at Philippi, to whom Paul was useful. This was a young woman who was possessed with an evil spirit, and pretended to foretell future things. She was a slave; and her wicked and cruel masters gained a great deal of money by her; for many people

came to see her, and to hear the things she said. When this young woman saw Paul and his companions, she followed them for many days, crying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." This was the truth; but the evil spirit did not mean the people to think it was; nor did the poor slave herself understand rightly what she said. But, at last, Paul being grieved, and full of pity, turned, and said to the spirit, "I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her;" and the evil spirit came out that same hour. And then the poor slave no longer said the wicked things she had said before; but became, we may hope, a true disciple of the Lord Jesus. But when her masters saw what was done, they were very angry, because now they would gain no more money by her; so they caught Paul and Silas, and brought them before the judges, and said, "These Jews greatly trouble our city, and teach things which are unlawful for us to receive, being Romans." Then the multitude rose up, and the judges commanded that the apostles should be beaten. So first they were beaten very cruelly, and then cast into prison; and the jailor was told to keep them safely. This jailor was a cruel, hard-hearted man, and very willing to do all the judges wished. So he thrust Paul and Silas into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

How sad it was for these two good men to be so cruelly punished for preaching the gospel, and trying to do good! But Paul and Silas

did not feel sad. They could be peaceful and happy even in the prison; for they knew that God was with them there, and they rejoiced to suffer for His sake. "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them." And God heard them too; and answered their prayer in a very wonderful way. He sent a great earthquake, which shook the prison to the foundations; and all the doors were opened, and every one's chains were loosed. The noise awoke the jailor out of his sleep; and when he saw what had happened, he thought that all the prisoners had escaped; and he drew his sword, and was going to kill himself; for he knew that he would be punished with some very cruel death, if his prisoners were really gone. But Paul cried out, "Do thyself no harm; for we are all here." Then the jailor called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Then they answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and they preached the gospel to him, and to all who were in the house. And that same hour, the jailor brought them out, and took them into his own house, and gave them food to eat; and was baptized with all his family, believing and rejoicing in the Lord.

What a wonderful change this was in the jailor! A few hours before, he was cruel and hard-hearted; and hated the apostles, and the gospel they preached. Now, he was gentle and willing to be taught;

and had become a humble believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The grace of God can change any heart; and He is willing to pardon and to save the greatest sinners. But there is only one way of being saved; and that is the way which Paul and Silas showed to the poor penitent jailor: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

In the morning, the magistrates sent to the prison, saying, "Let these men go." For the earthquake had frightened the magistrates as well as the jailor; but we are not told that they learnt to believe in Jesus Christ, as he did. Then the jailor went to Paul and Silas, and said, "The magistrates have sent to let you go; now then depart, and go in peace." But Paul answered, "No; they have punished us openly, uncondemned, and they should not send us away secretly. Let them come themselves, and fetch us out." When the magistrates heard this, they were afraid; for they thought they might perhaps displease the emperor of Rome, if they ill-treated Roman citizens; so they came directly, and brought out the apostles, and sent them away. Then Paul and Silas went to the

house of Lydia, and saw the brethren there, and comforted them, and departed.

Thus began a little Christian church at Philippi. Paul, some years after, wrote a very beautiful letter to these Christians. It is called in the Testament, "the epistle to the Philippians." The Philippians loved Paul very much, and often comforted him in his sorrows, and helped him in times of need. And Paul loved them too, and remembered and prayed for them when he was far distant from Philippi; and he sent them this letter by Timothy, to encourage them to go on serving the Lord; that, at last, he and they might meet in Heaven, and never be parted again. He said, "Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, rejoice. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." *Phil.* iv. 1-7.

CCCLI.

PAUL AT ATHENS.



PAUL and his friends then went on to Thessalonica, where was a Jewish synagogue, and taught there on the Sabbath-day.

Some of the Jews believed, and so did many of the Greeks. But the Jews who did not believe were angry, and called together some wicked men, and went to the house where the apostles lodged, to seek for them. The house belonged to a good man named Jason. These cruel enemies could not find the apostles; so they laid hold of Jason and the other brethren, and brought them before the rulers of the city, and said, "Those men who have troubled the world in other places, are come here also; and Jason has received them into his house. They are teaching people to disobey our laws; they say that there is another king, named Jesus." This troubled the rulers very much; but they did no hurt at that time to Jason and the others, but let them go. Then the brethren sent away Paul and Silas by night; and they came to Berea. God blessed Paul's preaching to many people at Thessalonica; and a Christian church was formed there, to which Paul afterwards wrote the two epistles to the Thessalonians.

Were the Jews at Berea more willing to attend to Paul than the Jews at Thessalonica? Yes; we are told they were "more noble than

those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so; therefore many of them believed." The Jews at Thessalonica hardly attended to what the apostles preached; those at Berea not only attended, but thought a good deal about it afterwards. They searched the Old Testament Scriptures, to see if they could find in them anything like what Paul said. And they did find much there about the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Moses, and David, and Isaiah, and others, had prophesied. And then many of these Bereans believed; for God blessed their searching of His word, and taught them more and more by His Spirit, and helped them to understand and believe the truth. This is a lesson for us. We ought not only to hear the gospel preached, but to read and search into the Bible for ourselves. We should "prove all things" by the Scriptures; asking God to enable us to understand them aright; and then He will lead us, by His Holy Spirit, into all truth, as He did the wise and noble Bereans.

But Paul could not stay long at this place; for the unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica came, and stirred up the people of Berea too; so the brethren sent Paul away, and he went to Athens.

We read a great deal about Athens

in history. It was a place very famous for learning, and wisdom, and knowledge, and politeness. But yet these people at Athens had no true wisdom; for they were ignorant of God, and of the Bible, and of the way to Heaven. They worshipped many false gods; and had feasts in honor of them; and these gods, they thought, were not holy and good, as the God of the Bible is; but bad and wicked; of like passions with themselves. Yet the Athenians worshipped them still; and thus, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools;" for they were "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." *Rom. i. 21.*

When Paul saw all this, he was grieved to the heart. He too was learned; and able to enjoy much which the Athenians enjoyed; and to admire many things which they admired. But Paul had that true wisdom of which they knew nothing. He had "learnt to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" and he could not feel happy at Athens, beautiful as it was, because "he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." So Paul went about, among the Jews, and the Greeks too, speaking to them of Jesus and the resurrection. At last, some of the philosophers, or wise men, met him, and asked him to explain to them what these new doctrines meant. So Paul stood on the top of a rock, called Mars' Hill, and said, "Ye men of Athens, as I passed by, and looked at the

gods ye worship, I saw an altar with this written on it—To the Unknown God. Now this God whom ye ignorantly worship, Him I preach unto you. The true God of whom I tell you, made the world, and all things that are in it; and He gives to us life, and breath, and all things. And it is His will that we should seek Him, and feel after Him, and find Him; for He is not far from any of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being. Then we ought not to think that this great God is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, as many ignorantly do. God is now making Himself known in all the world; and He commands people everywhere to repent, and to turn to Him and believe. For a day will come, when God will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He raised from the dead, even this same Jesus that I preach to you."

When Paul began to talk about the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; others said, "We will hear thee again another time." So Paul departed from them. Yet there were some, even in Athens, who believed what Paul preached. Among them was a man named Dionysius, and a woman called Damaris, and others with them. And thus while Paul preached "Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks "foolishness," those who believed found Christ to be "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." *1 Cor. i. 23, 24.*

CCCLII.

PAUL AT CORINTH.



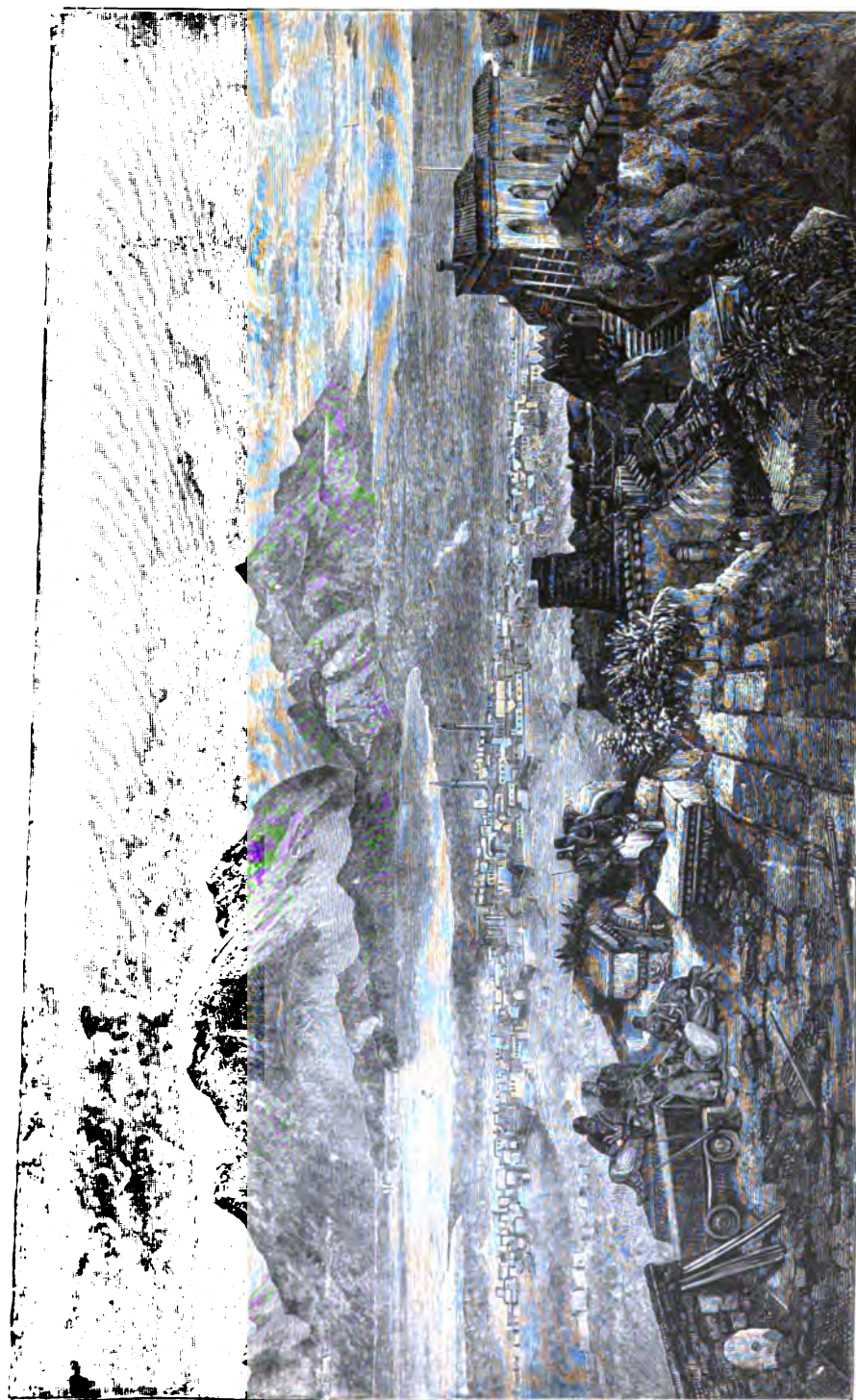
SO Paul left Athens, and went to Corinth, another city in Greece. There he found a Jew named Aquila, who had just come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because the Roman emperor had commanded all Jews to go away from Rome. Aquila and Priscilla were believing Jews, and very kind and friendly to Paul; so he went and stayed at their house. But Paul, and Aquila, and Priscilla, did not live in idleness; they had to work for their daily bread; and as they were of the same trade, they worked together; for they were tentmakers.

This is a lesson for us. God's people should be anxious to do good, and to be useful to others; but they must remember, too, not to neglect their own daily duties. If they are poor, as Paul and his friends were, they should work diligently to get their own living, that they may not be troublesome to those around them. And if, while they work with their hands, they think of God, and love Him in their hearts, He will bless them in everything they do. St. Paul says a great deal in his Epistles, about industry and diligence; and he reproves the idle and slothful, commanding them, "by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." 2 *Thess.* iii. 12. And he says again,

that "if any would not work, neither should he eat."

Every Sabbath-day, Paul went into the synagogue, and talked to the Jews and Greeks. The ruler of the synagogue, who was named Crispus, attended to what Paul preached, and believed with all his family; and so did many of the Corinthians. There were enemies of the gospel at Corinth, as at other places; but God appeared to Paul in a vision by night, and told him not to fear them. He said, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." This encouraged Paul; so he stayed a year and six months at Corinth, teaching the word of God to the people.

At last the Jews were so angry with Paul, that they laid hold of him, and brought him before Gallio, the Roman governor of Achaia, to be judged. They said, "This man teaches people to worship God contrary to the law." This was untrue; and Paul was just going to explain that what he preached was not contrary to the law; but Gallio was impatient, and would not hear. He said, "All this is no business of mine. I understand nothing of your law; you must look to the matter yourselves; for I will be no judge of such things;" and then he drove them away from the judg-



THE TOWN AND ISTHMUS OF CORINTH.

ment-seat. So the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, a friend of Paul, and beat him; but Gallio said nothing to them, for "he cared for none of these things."

Gallio was not so persecuting and cruel as many of the enemies of the gospel were; but he was really, perhaps, as much an enemy as any of them. He knew nothing of God, nor Christ, nor the way of salvation; and he wished to know nothing of them; for "Gallio cared for none of those things." But how sad it is to be careless about such matters! They are far more necessary for us to care about than any worldly things; and at the day of judgment we shall find them to be so. All will care for "those things" then; but at that awful time, caring for them will do no good: for it will be too late then to seek for pardon, and salvation, and eternal life in Heaven. Let us "care for the things that belong unto the Lord," and unto salvation, now; and then we shall be ready for death and judgment, whenever they may come.

Paul stayed at Corinth some time

after this; and then he took leave of the brethren there, and sailed towards Syria, with Priscilla and Aquila. A great many of the Corinthians became true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; and Paul loved them, and afterwards wrote them two long letters—the two epistles to the Corinthians. These letters are full of good advice, and kind warnings, and faithful reproofs too; for the Corinthians often did things which were wrong; and Paul loved them too well not to tell them of their faults. But he did all in affection, and like a kind and wise father; and they received his advice and reproofs like obedient and affectionate children. And then he comforted them when they were sorrowful, and prayed God to comfort them too; and he ended his last letter by telling them how they might be truly happy; happy in this world, and eternally happy in Heaven: "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect; be of good comfort; be of one mind; live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." 2 *Cor.* xiii. 11.

CCCLIII.

PAUL AT EPHESUS.



IN his way to Syria, Paul stopped at Ephesus, and left Aquila and Priscilla there; and then he went on, promising soon to return if it should be the will of God.

Another faithful minister came to Ephesus about this time; a Jew, named Apollos. He was a sincere believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and learned in the Scriptures, and bold, and diligent, and full of love. But Apollos was young, and did not yet understand the way of God perfectly; so Aquila and Priscilla used to ask him to their house; and then they talked to him about holy things, and explained to him what he did not know before. This was very useful to Apollos; for Aquila and Priscilla were older than he, and had served God longer, and had more knowledge. It was right and kind of them to instruct him; and Apollos was very grateful for their instructions. It is pleasant to see young people and older ones living as Priscilla and Aquila and Apollos did; and it is the way in which all Christians ought to live together.

After a little time, Apollos left Ephesus, and went to other places, preaching to the Jews, and "showing by the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ;" and while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul after visiting many different countries, came again to Ephesus. There were many dis-

ciples at Ephesus; but they had not yet received the Holy Ghost in that wonderful way in which it had been given to many others. Their hearts had been changed and made new by the Spirit; but they had not yet been taught by Him to speak with tongues, and to prophesy. So Paul, after he had baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus, laid his hands on them, and prayed; and then the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues, and prophesied. Paul stayed two years at Ephesus, preaching and working miracles in the name of Jesus.

At last, some of the unbelieving Jews in Ephesus pretended that they could do these wonders too; so they called over a man who had an evil spirit, the name of Jesus, saying, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." But the evil spirit answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?" And the man who had the evil spirit leaped upon them, and overcame them; so they fled from the house wounded and frightened. This was soon known among all the people at Ephesus; and many of them, when they heard it, believed; for it showed them that Paul worked miracles by the power of God, and that he was not a mere pretender, like those wicked unbelieving Jews. And many of those who had been magicians, or sorcerers, when they

believed the gospel, and found how foolish and sinful their arts were, brought their books, and burnt them before all men. Those books were full of what was wicked, and could do good to no one; so the Ephesians did right to burn them.

But after a time, there was great trouble in the city of Ephesus; for the enemies of the truth began to persecute the disciples there, as in other places. There was a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver images of Diana, the idol-goddess of the Ephesians. Demetrius was an idolator, and he gained his living by this wicked trade of image-making. But when the people of Ephesus became believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, they gave up their idolatry, and wanted no more silver images from Demetrius. Then the silversmith began to fear that he should lose his business; so he called together all the other silversmiths in the place, and said to them, "Sirs, you know that by this trade we have our wealth. Now this Paul, who preaches here, is turning away the people from the worship of Diana, and telling them that those are no gods which are made with hands. So now our trade is thought nothing of; no one comes to buy our silver images; and the temple of our great goddess Diana is despised." Then those who heard what Demetrius said were very angry, and cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." All the people in the city, when they heard the noise, came together; and some of them caught hold of two of the friends of Paul, and hurried them away. Paul wished to go to them; but his other friends would

not let him put himself into danger: so they kept him safely.

The tumult in the city lasted a long time. Some cried one thing, and some another; and many did not know why they had come together at all. Then a Jew, named Alexander, tried to defend himself; but as soon as he began to speak, the people cried out again, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians;" and they would not attend to any thing he said, because he was a Jew. At last, the town-clerk came out to quiet the people. He said to them, "Ye men of Ephesus, all the world knows that the people of this city worship the great goddess Diana, and the image which fell down from our god Jupiter; you need not cry out so loudly what every one believes. You ought to be quiet, and do nothing hastily; for these men, whom you accuse, have done you no hurt; they are not robbers of churches, nor blasphemers of your goddess. If Demetrius has any thing to say against them, let the matter be decided by law; for we are in danger of being called in question ourselves about this day's uproar." And when the town-clerk had said this, he sent away the multitude. So all was quiet; and then Paul called the disciples, and took leave of them, and departed.

The Ephesians were wise in many things; yet they were so foolish and so ignorant, that they could believe the silly stories which they were taught about the goddess Diana, and the image which fell down from Jupiter. There are many heathen nations as foolish now. Let us pray that God would send His gospel to them, and turn their hearts from

"idols to serve the living and true God." 1 *Thess.* i. 9.

But there were some true Christians among the Ephesians: and to them Paul afterwards wrote a beautiful epistle, when he himself was a prisoner at Rome. And in that letter he reminded them how wicked and ignorant they had once been; and thanked God who had pardoned their sins, and made them His own children through faith in

Christ Jesus. He said, "And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein, in times past, ye walked according to the course of this world. At that time ye were without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." *Eph.* ii. 1, 2; 13.

CCCLIV.

PAUL AT TROAS AND MILETUS.



AUL went into Macedonia again; and after visiting other places, came at last to Troas, on his way to Syria, and stayed there seven days. On the first day of the week, the disciples came together, and Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow. The first day of the week is our Sunday, the Christian Sabbath. The Jewish Sabbath was on the seventh day of the week; because on that day God rested from His work of creation, and "blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it." But after Christ's resurrection, the Sabbath was kept on the first day of the week; for Christians remember a still more glorious work which happened on that day. It was on the first day of the week that the Lord Jesus Christ arose from the grave, and so finished the work of our redemption.

It was in the evening, when the

little company of Christians at Troas met together to hear Paul preach. They assembled in an upper room; there were many lights in the room; and as Paul had much to say to the people, he went on preaching till midnight. There sat in a window of the room a young man named Eutychus; and as Paul was long preaching, this young man fell asleep, and at last sunk down with sleep, and fell from the window, and was taken up dead. All the disciples were in great trouble, when they saw what had happened; but Paul went down to the place where the dead body lay, and fell on it, and prayed God to raise Eutychus to life again. And God, who had before raised the dead at the prayers of Elijah and Elisha, was pleased to hear the prayer of Paul now, and to assure him that Eutychus should live again. So Paul said to those who were sorrow-

ing around, "Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him." Then Paul came up again, and ate bread with the disciples, and talked to them till morning, and then departed.

Paul left Troas, and went on foot to Assos; then he took ship, and sailed to Miletus. He was anxious to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost; so he hastened on his journey from place to place. But he would not leave Miletus without seeing some very dear friends. These were the elders of the church of Ephesus. He sent for them, that he might talk to them once more, before he took leave of them for ever. So when they were come, he spoke to them very affectionately and tenderly. He reminded them of all that he had said in times past; and then told them, that now he was going to Jerusalem, not knowing what might happen to him there. But he said, "The Holy Ghost tells me that, in every place, bonds and troubles await me. Yet none of these things move me; neither think I my life dear unto myself; I only wish to finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus. And

now I know that all you among whom I have preached shall see my face no more. Remember then what I have told you, and take care of the flock which God has given you to feed,—the church which He has bought with His own blood. I know that wolves will soon come among you, and try to destroy that little flock. Enemies will come, and try to lead you away from the truth of the gospel. Watch, then, and pray; and remember how I have warned you for three years, night and day, with tears. And now I give you up to God, and to the word of His grace; for He is able to keep you, and at last bring you safely to the inheritance He has prepared for them that are sanctified." And when Paul had said this, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all for the words that he spoke,—that they should see his face no more. So they went with him to the ship; then they again bid him farewell, and watched him for a long while, till at last the ship sailed far away beyond their sight, and they saw him no more.

CCCLV.

PAUL AT JERUSALEM.

IN his voyage to Jerusalem, Paul stopped at many places. He stayed seven days at Tyre, where he found some disciples; and when the time came for him to go away, these disciples all went with him to the sea-shore; and then they kneeled down, and prayed together. When they had taken leave of one another, the disciples returned home; and Paul and his companions sailed on first to Ptolemais, and then to Cæsarea. Paul stayed some days at Cæsarea, with Philip, of whom we read before, in the stories of Simon the Sorcerer, and the Ethiopian Eunuch. While Paul was there, a prophet came from Judea, named Agabus. This prophet had been taught, by the Holy Spirit, the things which should happen to Paul at Jerusalem. So he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owneth this girdle, and shall give him up to the Gentiles."

When the friends of Paul heard this, they all begged him not to go to Jerusalem. They loved him very much, and could not bear that he should suffer; and they wished to keep him with them, if they could. But what Agabus prophesied did not frighten Paul, nor trouble him at all. He turned to his friends, who were all weeping around him, and

said, "What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." His own sufferings he cared nothing for; but it troubled him very much to see others in sorrow for his sake. There was no selfishness in Paul. His only care was to be useful to others, and to glorify God in everything; either by preaching the gospel, or by suffering and dying for it. So when his friends saw how determined he was, they did not try to persuade him any more; but only said, "The will of the Lord be done." They knew that whatever God should appoint must be right, though it might be painful to Paul, and to them also, for his sake; and they left all to His will. And this is what we ought to do, in times of sorrow; we should say, "Lord, not as we will, but as Thou wilt."

So Paul came to Jerusalem. The brethren there received him with great joy; but very soon, the unbelieving Jews began to persecute him, as Agabus had prophesied. They accused him of speaking against the law, not understanding what it was that he really preached; and then they laid hold of him in the Temple, and drew him out, and tried to kill him. All Jerusalem was in an uproar; but at last the Roman captain, Lysias, came out with some soldiers; and then they

became quieter, and left off beating Paul. So Lysias took him, and bound him with two chains; and then he asked the people who Paul was, and what he had done. Some cried one thing and some another, and the chief captain could not understand what they meant; but he commanded Paul to be taken to the castle. As he was carried along by the soldiers, the multitude followed, crying, "Away with him;" just as many had cried when Christ Himself was taken to be put to death. Paul was now hated, and despised, and persecuted for his Master's sake.

When they came to the castle, Paul said to the chief captain, "May I speak to thee?" Paul said this in the Greek language, which surprised Lysias very much; for he had thought all this time that Paul was an Egyptian, who had made a rebellion in the country some time before. So the chief captain said, "Canst thou speak Greek? Art thou not the Egyptian who led into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?" Then Paul answered, "No; I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia. I pray thee let me speak now to these people." So Lysias gave him leave; and all the people stood quite still to hear what Paul would say.

And what did Paul speak to them about? He told them his past history: the wonderful stories which we have been reading, of his cruelties to the Christians at first, and his conversion to the faith of

Christ afterwards, when going to Damascus; and of the command which God gave him, to go and preach to the Gentiles. The people heard Paul patiently till he came to this, and then they grew very angry indeed. Why? Because, as Jews, they felt jealous of the Gentiles, and could not bear that God should show them any love or favor. This was a very bad spirit; quite different from the spirit of the gospel, which tells us that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, but that all are "one in Christ Jesus." But these Jews were not believers in the gospel of love and peace; so they cried out, "Away with this man; it is not right that he should live."

Then the chief captain brought Paul into the castle, and commanded that he should be beaten. But while they were binding him, Paul said to a centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful to beat a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" When the centurion heard this, he went to Lysias and said, "Take care what thou doest; for this man is a Roman." Then the chief captain asked Paul himself, "Art thou a Roman?" And he answered, "Yes." Lysias began to be frightened at this; for it was unlawful to treat a free citizen of Rome as Paul had been treated. So the next day, Lysias called together the chief priests and their council; and loosed Paul from his bonds, and brought him before them to be examined.

CCCLVI

PAUL BEFORE THE COUNCIL.



WHEN Paul began to defend himself, and said, "Men and brethren, I have lived honestly before God until this day." Paul did not mean by this that he had never done anything to displease God; for he well knew how weak and sinful he was. But he meant that he had not done those things of which his enemies accused him, and that he did not deserve to be brought there to be judged.

Then the high priest, Ananias, commanded those that stood by to smite Paul upon the mouth. This was cruel and unjust too, and Paul felt that it was; so he turned to Ananias, and said, "God shall smite thee, for sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" Some of the standers by said, "Revilest thou God's high-priest?" Then Paul answered, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written in God's law, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people." Paul remembered, even before his cruel and unjust enemies, that he ought to give honor to those to whom honor is due. But what Paul said to Ananias was afterwards fearfully fulfilled. God did smite that wicked man. Ananias was killed, some years after, in a rebellion headed by his own son.

Paul then began to speak of the resurrection of the dead. But as some of those who heard him were Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection, and some were Sadducees, who did not believe in it, they began to quarrel among themselves; and the confusion was so great, that Lysias feared Paul would be torn to pieces by the multitude; so he commanded the soldiers to take him away, and carry him into the castle. That very night, the Lord stood by him, and said, "Fear not, Paul; thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, and so thou must also in Rome."

The next day, some of the Jews made a conspiracy against Paul, and determined that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him. Then they went to the chief priests, and told them, and said, "We have determined neither to eat nor drink till we have killed Paul. Now, then, to-morrow ask the chief captain to bring him down to you again; and we, before he come near, are ready to kill him." But God had determined that Paul should not die at Jerusalem, and He found a way of escape for him.

It happened that a nephew of Paul heard something of this conspiracy, and he went directly to the castle, and told his uncle. Then Paul called a centurion, and asked him to take the young man to the

chief captain. So the centurion went with Paul's nephew to Lysias, and said, "Paul, the prisoner, asked me to bring this young man to thee; he has something to tell thee." Then Lysias took Paul's nephew by the hand, and drew him aside, and said, "What hast thou to tell me?" The young man answered, "The Jews are going to-morrow to ask thee to bring Paul again into the council; but do not yield to them; for there are more than forty men who have made a vow neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, looking for a promise from thee." Then the chief captain told the young man to keep all secret, and sent him away. As soon as he was gone, Lysias called two centurions, and told them to make ready a number of soldiers, and horsemen, and spearmen, and send them that night with Paul, to Cæsarea, to Felix, the governor. Then he wrote a letter to Felix, telling him all about Paul, and how he had been accused, and how his enemies had conspired against him; and he asked Felix to hear for himself what Paul had to say. So the soldiers did as they were commanded, and brought Paul to Cæsarea, and gave the letter to the governor. When Felix had read it, he said he would hear Paul's defence as soon as his accusers were come; and commanded that Paul should be kept in Herod's judgment-hall at Cæsarea.

In a few days Ananias, the high priest, came to Cæsarea, and with him a man named Tertullus, one of Paul's enemies. Then Paul was called out, and brought before Felix;

and Tertullus began to accuse him, as others had done, of despising the temple, and troubling the Jewish people. All the Jews who heard Tertullus speak, agreed with him, and said that what he had spoken was true. Then Paul defended himself, saying that his enemies falsely accused him of making a tumult or disturbance in Jerusalem. But there was one thing they accused him of, which he confessed was quite true; and that was, his preaching about the resurrection of the dead. Then Felix said he would hear Paul again another time; so he commanded the centurion to keep him, but to treat him kindly, and to let his friends come and see him.

After some days, Felix sent for Paul again, and heard him speak about "the faith in Christ." And as Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." And Felix used often to send for him, and hear him talk; hoping that Paul would offer him money, that he might loose him. But we do not read that Felix ever found a "convenient season" for seeking to become righteous, and ready for "the judgment to come," though he trembled so much when Paul spoke to him of these things. Perhaps Felix thought, "I will attend to all this another day; there is time enough yet;" and so he put off repentance till it was too late; and at last died without pardon, and without hope. Learn from Felix to attend to heavenly things now; and not to wait for a more "convenient

season." The Bible tells us that the day of salvation." 2 Cor. the best season is the present: vi. 2.
 "Now is the accepted time; now is

CCCLVII.

PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA.



AFTER two years a new governor came to Cæsarea, named Festus; and Felix went away, leaving Paul bound. Then the Jews told Festus all about Paul; and Festus commanded that he should be brought before his judgment-seat. Paul again answered for himself, that he had done nothing against the Jews, nor against their law, nor their temple; and then he said that he wished to be judged by Cæsar, the Roman emperor. Paul bore all his sufferings patiently, but he wished for justice; he had a right, as a Roman citizen, to be judged by Cæsar; and he thought this the best way of saving himself from his cruel enemies, the Jews. Festus was willing that it should be so. He said, "Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go." But after some days, king Agrippa came to Cæsarea, with his sister Bernice, to see Festus. This Agrippa was son of the wicked Herod who put Peter into prison. He was king of Judea, Galilee, Samaria, and some other places.

Festus told Agrippa a great deal about the prisoner Paul, and Agrip-

pa became very anxious to see him; so the next day, when Agrippa, and Bernice, and the chief captains, and the nobles of the city, were come into the place of hearing, Festus commanded that Paul should be brought before them; and then Agrippa said to him, "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself." So Paul stretched out his hand, and answered for himself.

He told them all his history; how he was brought up, how he at first hated and persecuted the Christians; and how, at last, he was converted, and became a Christian himself, and a preacher of the Gospel. And then he told them what it was he preached. It was about the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Moses and the prophets wrote, who died for sinners, and rose again the third day. When Paul said this, Festus cried out, with a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." For Festus did not believe what Paul said, so he thought it all folly and madness. But Paul answered calmly, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and soberness." And then

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ROME. FROM THE PINCIAN HILL.

he turned to Agrippa, and said, "The king knoweth these things; they are not hidden from him. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." For Agrippa professed the Jewish religion, and had often heard and read Moses and the prophets. Agrippa felt the power of what Paul said, and answered, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Then Paul said, "I would to God, that not only thou, but all those who hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." When he had spoken these words, Agrippa, and Bernice, and Festus, and all the company, rose up, and went apart by themselves, and began to talk together about Paul. They agreed that he was innocent; but as he had appealed to Cæsar, it was determined

that he should be sent to Rome. And did Agrippa become a Christian? No; we do not read that he ever did. He was half inclined to believe; almost determined to love the Saviour whom Paul loved; but he never was, we may fear, really and truly a Christian. And therefore, like Felix, when death came, Agrippa was not ready for it; his sins were not pardoned; his heart was not made new; and he died without hope, notwithstanding all he had felt and wished, perhaps, when Paul preached to him.

Let this sad story teach you to be decided in religion; and to be decided at once. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve;" and pray that you may be enabled to say with all your heart, as Joshua did, "As for me, I will serve the Lord." *Joshua* xxiv. 15.

CCCLVIII

PAUL ON THE SEA.

WHEN all was ready, Paul and some of his fellow-prisoners were given up to the care of a centurion, and began their voyage towards Rome. As they sailed along, they touched at Sidon; and the centurion kindly allowed Paul to go on shore, and see his friends, and refresh himself. Then they left Sidon, and passed by Cyprus, and sailed over the seas of Cilicia and Pamphylia, and came to Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found another ship sailing to Italy, so he put the prisoners into it. Then they sailed very slowly for some days, for the wind was against them; and at last they came to Crete, to a place called the Fair Havens. It was now late in the year, and sailing became dangerous, because of the storms which were very common and very violent in those seas; so Paul called to those in the ship, and said, "Sirs, I see that this voyage will be with much hurt and danger, not only to the ship, but also to our lives." But most of them were anxious to sail to Phenice, another haven of Crete, and there to winter. So they would not attend to Paul, who wished them to stay quietly where they were; but as the south wind blew softly, they loosed from the Fair Havens, and sailed close by Crete.

Not long after, a stormy wind arose, and the ship was tossed about

upon the waves, and the sky became black with clouds, and they saw neither sun nor stars for many days. Then they wished they had taken Paul's advice; but it was too late now. So they cast their goods out of the ship, to lighten it, and thought only how they might save their lives. Soon all hope was taken away; every one was in terror, expecting that the ship must sink, and that they would be swallowed up in the deep waters, and rise no more. But Paul was peaceful and happy still; and when the others were so much frightened, he stood in the midst of them, and said, "Fear not; there shall be no loss of any man's life, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night, the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, 'Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Cæsar; and God has given thee all them that sail in the ship with thee.' Be of good comfort, then; for I believe God, that it shall be as it was told me. But we must be cast on a certain island."

Soon after, the shipmen found that they were coming near to some country. Then they feared they might fall upon rocks, as it was now night, so they cast out their anchors, and wished for day. The sailors wanted to leave the ship, and escape in a boat; but Paul said to the centurion and soldiers, "If these men do not stay in the ship, you

cannot be saved." So the soldiers prevented these selfish men from leaving the ship, at a time when they were wanted so much. Then Paul comforted them, and told them to take some meat, for they had fasted a long time, and he gave thanks to God before them all, and broke bread, and eat. When it was day, they found themselves close to the land. They did not know what the name of the country was, nor who lived in it; but they determined to seek safety there. The cruel soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, fearing that some of them might swim out and escape. But the centurion was willing to save Paul, and would not let the soldiers do as they wished.

The ship was now almost broken to pieces by the violence of the waves; so the centurion commanded that those who could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land; and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

A storm at sea is a very fearful thing. The Psalmist tells us so, when he says, "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They

mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them to the haven where they would be." *Psalm cvii. 23—30.*

You may never have seen a storm at sea, and perhaps you never will. But there are storms of another kind, which we must all meet with some time or other. Life is like a voyage, and troubles and sorrows are like the storms and tempests on the sea. At the beginning of life, everything, perhaps, looks fair and sunny; and young people think it will always be so: just as these shipmen thought that their voyage would be safe and pleasant, "when the south wind blew softly." But a storm soon came upon them, and so sorrow will come upon us; for, as the Bible says, we are "born to trouble." And what can comfort us then? Only what comforted Paul, and what comforted the poor disciples when they were tossed upon the waves in the sea of Galilee;—believing that Christ is near, saying, "Fear not; it is I; be not afraid." If He is with us, we need fear none of the storms of life; for He will keep us in them all, and bring us safely through the "waves of this troublesome world, to the land of everlasting life."

CCCLIX.

PAUL AT MELITA AND ROME.



PAUL and his companions soon found that the land to which they had escaped was called Melita. It is an island in the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sicily, and is now called Malta. The people then living at Melita were ignorant heathens; but they were very kind to the poor shipwrecked people; for they lighted a fire, and invited them to come and warm themselves by it, because of the rain and cold. So Paul gathered some sticks, and threw them on the fire, and they all stood round warming themselves. But Paul, and the others, had not seen a viper which was hid among the sticks; and now the heat brought it out, and it fastened upon Paul's hand. When the heathens saw this, they said one to another, "No doubt that man is a murderer; he has escaped from the sea; but he will be punished for his wickedness here; he will not be suffered to live." But Paul shook off the viper into the fire, and felt no hurt. The islanders looked on for a long time, thinking that Paul would certainly die; but when they found that he was not hurt, they changed their minds, and said he must be a god. These poor people were sadly ignorant, but Paul was able and willing to teach them better; and so he did.

One of the chief men in the island was named Publius. He was very

kind to Paul, and lodged him in his house three days. The father of Publius was very ill of a fever; so Paul went in to see him, and prayed, and layed his hands on him, and healed him. When the people heard of this, many others came to Paul to be cured, and he did good to them all. But Paul was most anxious to do good to their souls; so he used to speak to them of the Lord Jesus Christ, the good physician, who could heal them of a disease much worse than any bodily sickness. We may believe that many of these poor islanders became true Christians, through the preaching of Paul; and this made him so happy, that he forgot all his past sufferings and dangers.

After three months, Paul and his companions took leave of their kind friends at Melita, and sailed in a new ship to Rome. There were some Christians at Rome, to whom Paul had before written the epistle to the Romans; and when these Christians heard that he was coming, they went to meet him, as far as Appii Forum. Paul was very glad to see them, and thanked God, and took courage. Then they all went on to Rome. As soon as they were come there, the centurion delivered the other prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was suffered to live by himself, with a soldier that kept him. A great

many Jews came to see Paul; and he told them all that had happened to him, and why he was sent to Rome; for they had heard nothing of it before. Then they asked him to tell them those things which he preached, and for which he was accused; so he invited them to his lodging, and there spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and about Jesus the Messiah; teaching them from the law of Moses and the prophets, from morning until evening. "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." Paul spoke very faithfully and solemnly to the unbelievers; and then they departed. Perhaps they never again heard the Gospel preached to them.

Paul stayed in his own house at

Rome two years, "teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, no man forbidding him." He wrote many of his epistles while at Rome. Besides those of which we have read before, he sent one to the Colossians, and another to Titus, the first bishop of Crete; it is thought also that the epistle to the Hebrews, or Jewish Christians, was written by Paul. Thus he could be useful even when a prisoner; and he was enabled to bear all his sufferings with patience, knowing that he was "the prisoner of the Lord;" "an ambassador in bonds" for Christ's sake; and he could say, even with joy, "for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

CCCLX.

PHILEMON AND ONESIMUS.



ONE of the last letters that Paul wrote, was the epistle to Philemon. Philemon was a rich man of Colosse, who had learnt to believe the Gospel from hearing Paul preach. Philemon had a servant named Onesimus; but this servant was very unlike his good master, and very unlike what servants should be. He was a dishonest and wicked man. He stole some of Philemon's property, and then ran away with it, and escaped to Rome. But while

there, Onesimus heard Paul preach; and God blessed what was said, so that it brought Onesimus to repent of his sins, and to ask for pardon through Jesus Christ, and for grace to serve God for the time to come. Thus Onesimus became a true Christian; and then he wished to go back to his master, and tell him how sorry he was, and ask for forgiveness. But perhaps Onesimus felt half afraid at first, lest Philemon should not receive him, nor believe what he said. So Paul wrote a letter, telling Philemon all about

Onesimus, and asking him to forgive him; and then he sent the servant with it to Colosse. Paul said in this letter, "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, which in time past was unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: whom I have sent again. Thou therefore receive him; not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved." For Onesimus was now a believer in Jesus, as well as Philemon; and in Christ there is "neither bond nor free;" for all are one in Him; therefore Philemon was not only to pardon his servant, but to love him too.

Paul remembered that Onesimus had injured Philemon; he had stolen some of his property; and perhaps Onesimus was not now able to repay him; though, no doubt, he would try to do so, if he could; so Paul said, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee any thing, put that on my account; I will repay it." How kind and generous Paul was! And we may believe that Philemon was kind and generous too, and that he received Onesimus, and forgave and forgot all his past wickedness, and did not wish to be repaid by Paul. For Philemon himself owed much to Paul, more than he could ever pay;—he had learnt from him to seek the salvation of his soul.

What became of Paul at last? We are now very near the end of his history. After two years, he was set free; and then he visited those places where he had formed churches; and warned, and advised, and comforted the Christians in them. Paul also went to other and more distant countries. It is thought

that he travelled even as far as our own country, and was the first who preached the gospel in Britain. At last he returned to Rome. He was not very old. When he wrote to Philemon, he called himself "Paul the aged;" and he had long been looking forward to death,—to a violent and cruel death; but he looked forward to it with peace and joy. He said to Timothy, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." 2 *Tim.* iv. 6—8. And now the time was come for Paul to be offered. He had labored, and preached, and suffered for Christ; and at last He died for His sake. He was beheaded at Rome, by the command of Nero, the wicked and cruel emperor. We are not told anything about his last hours, and his dying words; but we know that he must have died happily, because he died trusting in Christ, and for His sake; and now he has received "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 *Pet.* v. 4.

What happened to the other apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ? All suffered, and most of them were put to death, for their Master's sake. Peter, after laboring and preaching much, particularly among the Jews, and writing two beautiful epistles, was crucified in his old age, as Christ had foretold. He remembered his Saviour's words, "Follow me;" and he did follow him faithfully, even unto death. *John* xxi. 18, 19

James was slain by Herod, as we read before. The other James, called "the Less," Andrew, Thomas, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon, Jude, and Matthias, were put to death at different places, and in different ways. James the Less wrote an epistle; so also did Jude.

Thomas, it is supposed, went as far as Persia and India, and preached to the heathens in those countries;

and was, at last, put to death by the idolatrous Brahmins, or priests of India. Yet God blessed the labors of His faithful servant and martyr, even long after his death. Churches were formed among the wild mountains of India; and Christians are still found there, who, it is thought, are descended from those first converted by the preaching of Thomas.

CCCLXI

PATMOS.



HE apostle who lived the longest was John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He was not put to death, as the others were; but he was cruelly persecuted, and at last sent to the isle called Patmos, far away from his country and his friends. But John had the peace of God in his heart, and therefore he could be contented and happy even in a desert island.

One Lord's day, the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath, John was sitting alone, thinking on heavenly things. He could not go now to the house of God, and worship there with His people: but John could still keep the Sabbath in his own heart;—"he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Suddenly he heard behind him a great voice, like the sound of a trumpet; and, turning round, he saw standing by him "one like unto the Son of

man." It was the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who had come to comfort His servant John; but He did not now look as He had done when He was on earth, as "a man of sorrows," when John saw Him suffering in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross of Calvary. He appeared now in glory. "His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass; and His voice as the sound of many waters; and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." The sight was too bright and glorious for John to bear, and he fell at His feet as dead; as he had done once before, when Jesus appeared in glory at His transfiguration. But Jesus laid His hand on John, and said, "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead; and be-

hold I am alive for evermore, Amen." Then John was comforted; for he felt that Jesus was still the same; as merciful and full of love now, as when John had followed Him, and

listened to His words, so many years before. Jesus never changes. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." *Heb. xiii. 8.*

CCCLXII.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES.



WHAT did the Lord Jesus say to John, when He appeared to him at Patmos? First, He sent messages by him to seven Christian churches which had been formed in Asia. He said, "What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea."

And what were the messages John was to send? Some of them were very fearful indeed. The professing Christians of these churches had long known and believed the Gospel; but many had become "weary in well doing;" and some had "departed from the faith," and forsaken Christ altogether. Only a few were still faithful and steadfast. So John was to warn the careless among them. He was to say to them from Christ, "Repent: or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth." Then he was to encourage those who were willing to attend to the message, and write to

them, "Behold! I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me." He was to tell them that Jesus was still willing to pardon the penitent.

But some of these Christians were faithful, and messages full of love were sent to them. They were to suffer indeed, for Christ's sake, as all true Christians must; but then they had many promises to comfort them in all their sorrows. Jesus said to them, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels. Behold I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

When John wrote the epistle to Smyrna, a good man was bishop of the church there, named Polycarp. He was the friend and disciple of John, and lived for some years after his master's death. John had told



ENG. BY E. SEARS, N. Y.

PATMOS. FORT OF SCALA AND TOWN OF PATINO.

the Christians of Smyrna, in his letter, that they should be tried, and suffer tribulation; and so it was, and the good old bishop himself was among the faithful martyrs.

When Polycarp was taken prisoner, and brought by his enemies to be judged, some of them pitied him, because he was a very aged man; and they were willing to let him go, if he would only deny Christ. But Polycarp could not do this; he remembered that he must be "faithful unto death," if he would have "a crown of life." So he calmly turned to his enemies, and said, "Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and He hath never wronged me; and how can I deny my King who hath saved me?" Then his enemies threatened him with wild beasts and with fire; but Polycarp was still steadfast. He answered, "I am ready; why do you wait any longer? Do as you please with me." Then it was proclaimed aloud, "Polycarp has professed himself a Christian;" and his enemies immediately prepared to burn him alive. So Polycarp was bound to the stake, and there he stood quietly, and lifted up his eyes to Heaven, and said, "O Father of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, I bless thee that thou hast counted me worthy of this hour, to receive my portion in the number of martyrs, among whom may I be received before Thee this day. I praise Thee, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, by the eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, through whom, and with

whom, and the Holy Spirit, be glory to thee now and ever. Amen." Then the fire was lighted, and the flames burst out. And so Polycarp died, and went to join that noble army of martyrs "who have come out of great tribulation," and are now "before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple."

But where are the seven churches now? Most of them have passed away, so that the places where once they were, know them no more. And those which still remain are in a sad state of ignorance,—they know and understand very little of the gospel of Christ. The cities of Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea, are now in ruins. Pergamos, Thyatira, and Philadelphia are still to be found; but they are not what once they were; and the Christians who live in them are ignorant and in error. Smyrna, where Polycarp was once bishop, is a large and busy city even now; and many professing Christians still live there.

And why is it that none of these early churches are now what they were when John wrote to them? They forsook God after a time; and then, at last, His blessing was taken from them, and some were destroyed altogether, and others are left in ignorance and error. When we read the epistles to the seven churches, let us take warning from them; and watch and pray lest God's blessing should be taken away from us also. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

CCCLXIII.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION.



AFTER John had heard the messages to the churches, he saw, in vision, many glorious and wonderful things. He saw Heaven opened, and God Himself sitting upon His throne in glory. A rainbow, the emblem of mercy, was over His head; and round about the throne were the happy company of Christ's redeemed people, clothed in white raiment, and with crowns of gold upon their heads. And they fell down before Him that sat on the throne, and cast their crowns before Him, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created."

After this, John saw, in the midst of the throne, "a Lamb as it had been slain." That Lamb was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, of whom the lambs slain by the Israelites in sacrifice were only emblems or types. He was "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

And then John saw the happy company of Heaven fall down before the Lamb; and they sang a new song, saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." And then he heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them

was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

After this, many things were shown to John in vision, of which we read in the Book of Revelation. There is much in that book very hard to be understood, because it tells us of things which are still future; but when these prophecies are fulfilled, we shall understand all clearly; and there is much which we can understand in the Book of Revelation, even now. It tells us of that great day when the Lord Jesus Christ will come to punish his enemies, and to take His own people to glory; it tells us of the day of judgment, when the dead, small and great, will stand before God, and the books will be opened, and the dead will be judged out of the things written in those books, according to their works. It tells us of the lake of fire, into which those must be cast whose names are not found written in the book of life. And it tells us, too, of that glorious city, the New Jerusalem, where only God's people will be; where there will be "no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." All these things we read of in the Book of Revelation.

John did not end his life at Patmos. After a time, he was set free, and went to Ephesus, where he died when he was a very old man. John wrote three epistles, besides the Book of Revelation. The first is called "General;" that is, it was not sent to any one place or person in particular, it was addressed to all the churches of Christ throughout the world. The second was written to a lady and her children, whom John loved "in the truth;" and the third to a kind friend, a very good man, named Gaius.

When John was too old to walk about, or preach much, he used to be carried to the places where the people met together, and say to them, "Little children, love one another." Thus "the disciple whom Jesus loved" remembered to the very last his Master's command, "Love one another, as I have loved you;" and he tried, till his death, to teach others, as he had himself been taught of Christ.

And now we are come to the end of the Bible History; for John was the last inspired writer of God's Word; and the Book of Revelation

is the last book in the Bible. And what is the last message which God has left us? How does the Bible end? The last invitation is this: "The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." One of the last words in the Bible is, "Come." Come, for all things are now ready. The Father is willing to receive you; Jesus Christ is willing to wash away your sins in His own blood; the Holy Spirit is willing to renew and sanctify your heart. Come then, and pray for these blessings before it is too late; for Jesus says again, "Surely, I come quickly." Death is coming, Christ is coming, the day of judgment is coming; and there will be no time then to pray for pardon, and salvation, and happiness, and Heaven. Seek for them now; for "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation;" and then you will be ready to meet your Saviour with joy, and say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

APPENDIX.

It has been suggested that the value of this Bible narrative of events and personages would be enhanced by a few supplemental articles adapted to the purpose of Scriptural instruction. It is not proposed to construct this supplement with reference to juvenile readers especially, but to give it a range and form fitted to interest all such readers as have a relish for religious truth and knowledge.

PARABLES OF JESUS.

The topic first introduced relates to the PARABLES of our Lord. It is known that one peculiar feature of His instructions was the parabolic style. In this respect, He differed from all other inspired religious teachers. The word "parable," or "similitude," has been defined to be the *placing of one thing together with or by the side of another*. The parable resembles a fable, but differs from it in some essential particulars. A very satisfactory statement of the chief distinctive features of these two modes of moral teaching is given by Neander, who remarks, "The parable is distinguished from the fable by this, that, in the latter, qualities or acts of a higher class of beings may be attributed to a lower (*e.g.* those of men to brutes); while, in the former, the lower sphere is kept perfectly distinct from that which it seems to illustrate. The beings and powers thus introduced always follow the law of their nature; but their acts, according to this law, are used to figure those of a higher race." Of the fable, as thus distinguished from the parable, two examples, and only two, are found in the Bible: (1) That of the trees choosing their king, addressed by Jotham to the men of Shechem (Judg. ix. 8-15); (2) That of the cedar of Lebanon and the thistle, as the answer of Joash to the challenge of Amaziah (2 Kings xiv. 9). The absence of fables from the teachings both of the Old and New Testament is attributed to their want of fitness to be the media of the truths which that teaching was to convey. It is inadequate as the exponent of the higher truths which belong to man's spiritual life. It may serve to exhibit the relations between man and man: it fails to represent those between man and God. To do that is the office of the PARABLE.

At the commencement of His ministry, our Lord made no use of parables. The Sermon on the Mount may be taken as the type of the "words of grace and truth" which He spake. For some months, He taught in the synagogue, and on the seashore of Galilee, as He had before taught in Jerusalem; and as yet without a parable. But then there comes a change. The direct teaching of Christ was met with scorn, unbelief, hardness; and He seems for a time to abandon it for that which took the form of parables. The question of the disciples (Matt. xiii. 10) implies that they were astonished. Their Master was speaking to the multitude in the parables and dark sayings which the rabbis reserved for their chosen disciples.

"The key to the explanation He gave, that He had chosen this form of teaching," is found in Matt. xiii. 13, and in Mark iv. 12. "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they, seeing, see not; and, hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand." "That, seeing, they may see, and not perceive; and, hearing, they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." Two interpretations have been given of these words: (1) Spiritual truths, it has been said, are in themselves hard and uninviting. Men needed to be won to them by that which was more attractive. (2) Others, again, have seen in this use of parables something of a penal character. To the inner circle of the chosen it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: to those who are without, all these things are done in parables. Neither view is wholly satisfactory. Each contains a partial truth. The worth of parables as instruments lies in their being at once a test of character, and in their presenting each form of character with that which, as a penalty or blessing, is adapted to it. They withdraw the light from those who love darkness. They protect the truth, which they enshrine from the mockery of the scoffer. They leave something even with the careless, which may be interpreted and understood afterwards. They reveal, on the other hand, the seekers after truth. These ask the meaning of the parable, and will not rest till the teacher has explained it. In this way, the parable did its work,—found out the fit hearers, and led them on. And it is to be remembered, that, even after this self-imposed law of reserve and reticence, the teaching of Christ presented a marvellous contrast to the narrow exclusiveness of the scribes."

The parables, says Lisco, serve at the same time to reveal and to conceal spiritual truth. In the case of genuine inquirers, they reveal the truth to the eye of faith; while they conceal it from the carnal, the sensual, and the ungodly. The great mass of the people addressed by Christ were extremely rude and unpolished, blunted through fleshly inclination, indifferent to the highest interests of man, and consequently so much the less capable of relishing a discourse devoid of imagery. The small number of those who were better inclined, especially his own disciples, were in like manner held fast in Jewish prejudices, in false views of the kingdom of God about to be erected, unskilled in spiritually apprehending the spiritual, and much too weak to look upon all the truths of the gospel if presented in naked simplicity.

If reasons for the parabolic style of instruction so much employed by our Lord were found in the condition of His hearers, viewed in connection with the truths delivered by Him, other reasons are also to be discovered for it in the peculiar nature of this kind of instruction. An attractive power of the parable as a medium of religious instruction is found in its *historic* element. "Nothing," says Lisco, "is so attractive to us as history; nothing more awakens our attention and interest than the behavior and the fate of our fellow-men: and are not most of the parables *histories* from human life? This is what makes the Bible so attractive and full of instruction,—that it contains so much history. And as God, through means of the histories contained in His word, wishes to nurture and form us as His nourishing grace is represented to have done in the history of those persons as contained in the Old and New Testament, so are the parables of Jesus histories of the divine economy toward us; and as the Father, so also the Son, wishes in this manner to instruct and train us by the help of history. Besides, for history, at least for short narratives, stupidity itself will give attention; and they awaken the interest of those who are most unfeeling. Whoever in his levity and folly has shut his ear and his heart against instruction, admonition, threatening, and warning, may possibly be disposed to open them to a narrative; and thus, through means of the history, the seed of divine wisdom gains admittance into the heart. Are not the parables, then, on this account, singularly fitted for being vehicles of instruction? Even if nothing further were at first accomplished by this form of instruction than impressing the truth taught more readily and deeply upon the memory, this were of itself an important benefit, and would greatly recommend its use. But, as the figurative language of Christ contains in itself eternal truth, there moves in it a living power, which, being faithfully preserved, will some time manifest itself to the enlightenment of the understanding, to the improvement of the mind, to the sanctification of the will, and the blessed satisfaction of the whole man."

If we direct our attention to the perfectness and beauty of the parables of our Lord, we shall find them "apples of gold in pictures of silver." "In them is treasured up an inexhaustible store of instruction, consolation, warning, and admonition. Their meaning is richer than the sea: every new consideration of them discovers to us new relations, gives new solutions, spreads new light over the affairs of the heavenly kingdom."—*Vide Lisco and Dr. Trench on the Parables.*

The number of parables supposed to be contained in the Gospels will depend on the range given to the application of them by different commentators. Dr. Trench reckons their number at thirty, Lisco enumerates thirty-seven, and others extend the number even to fifty. There is reason to believe that there were many of which we have no record. In those recorded, an order of arrangement and classification has been noticed. In grouping them, the following classification has been adopted by recent expositors:—

I. The first group of parables introduced by the great Teacher relates to the development of the kingdom of God, its growth, its nature, its consummation. Under this head the following are specified:—

1. The Sower. (Matt. xiii. ; Mark iv. ; Luke viii.)
2. The Wheat and the Tares. (Matt. xiii.)
3. The Mustard-Seed. (Matt. xiii. ; Mark iv.)
4. The Seed Cast into the Ground. (Mark iv.)
5. The Leaven hid in the Meal. (Matt. xiii.)
6. The Hid Treasure. (Matt. xiii.)
7. The Pearl of Great Price. (Matt. xiii.)
8. The Net cast into the Sea. (Matt. xiii.)

Throughout these instructive parables may be discovered the progressive development and inward form of the kingdom of heaven in its conflicts and victories, from the first sowing of the seed (the direct preaching of the gospel) to the final result,—the separation, or the last judgment.

II. When the next parables meet us, they are of a different type, and occupy a different position. They occur chiefly in the interval between the mission of the seventy, and the last approach to Jerusalem. They are drawn from the life of men rather than from the world of nature. Often they occur, not, as in Matt. xiii., in discourses to the multitude, but in answers to the questions of the disciples, or other inquirers. They are as follows :—

9. The Two Debtors. (Luke vii.)
10. The Merciless Servant. (Matt. xviii.)
11. The Good Samaritan. (Luke x.)
12. The Friend at Midnight. (Luke xi.)
13. The Rich Fool. (Luke xii.)
14. The Wedding-Feast. (Luke xii.)
15. The Fig-Tree. (Luke xiii.)
16. The Great Supper. (Luke xiv.)
17. The Lost Sheep. (Matt. xviii. ; Luke xv.)
18. The Lost Piece of Money. (Luke xv.)
19. The Prodigal Son. (Luke xv.)
20. The Unjust Steward. (Luke xvi.)
21. The Rich Man and Lazarus. (Luke xvi.)
22. The Unjust Judge. (Luke xviii.)
23. The Pharisee and the Publican. (Luke xviii.)
24. The Laborers in the Vineyard. (Matt. xx.)

Towards the close of our Lord's ministry, immediately before and after the entry into Jerusalem, the parables assume a new character. They are again theocratic; but the phase of the divine kingdom on which they chiefly dwell is that of its final consummation. They are prophetic, in part, of the rejection of Israel: in part, of the great retribution of the coming of the Lord. To this class the following may be referred :—

25. The Pounds. (Luke xix.)
26. The Two Sons. (Matt. xxi.)
27. The Vineyard let out to Husbandmen. (Matt. xxi. ; Mark xii. ; Luke xx.)

- 28. The Marriage-Feast. (Matt. xxii.)
- 29. The Wise and Foolish Virgins. (Matt. xxv.)
- 30. The Talents. (Matt. xxv.)
- 31. The Sheep and the Goats. (Matt. xxv.)

It will be seen that the greater part of the parables included in the first and third groups belong to Matthew, emphatically the evangelist of the kingdom. Those of the second are found, for the most part, in Luke. They are such as might be expected in the Gospel which dwells most on the sympathy of Christ for all men. Mark, as giving vivid recollections of the acts rather than the teaching of Christ, is the scantiest of the three Gospels. It is characteristic of John that no parables, properly so called, are contained in the Gospel he wrote. That which his spirit, having passed into a higher state of knowledge, appropriated most readily, were the words of eternal life; figurative it might be in form, abounding in bold analogies, but not, in any single instance, taking the form of a narrative.

The spurious Gospels, written soon after the apostolic age, contain no parables. This shows that the parables of Jesus were inimitable by any writers of that age. They possess a life and power which stamp them as with the "image and superscription" of the Son of man.

"As it respects the law of interpretation, applicable to parables, it has been urged by some writers from the earliest times, that there is a scope or purpose for each parable; and that our aim must be to discern this, not to find out a special significance to each circumstance or incident. The rest, it is said, may be dealt with as drapery; which the parable needs for its grace and completeness, but which is not essential. It may be questioned, however, whether this canon of interpretation is likely to lead us to the full meaning of this portion of our Lord's teaching. True as it doubtless is, that there was in each parable a leading thought, to be learnt partly from the parable itself, partly from the occasion of its utterance, and that all else gathers round that thought as a centre, it must be remembered, that, in the great patterns of interpretation which He himself has given us, there is more than this. Not only the sower and the seed, and the several soils, have their counterparts in the spiritual life, but the birds of the air, the thorns, the scorching heat, have each of them a significance. The explanation of the wheat and the tares, given with less fulness, an outline as it were, which the advancing scholars would be able to fill up, is equally specific. It may be inferred from these two instances, that we are at least justified in looking for a meaning even in the seeming accessories of a parable. The direct teaching of Christ presents the standard to which all our interpretations are to be referred, and by which they are to be measured."—*Vide Rev. E. H. Plumptre.*

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS.

Our Saviour's miracles were numerous, and remarkable as exhibitions of His power and benevolence. In the Sacred Scriptures they are represented as *wonders*,

signs, powers, and simply works. The title "wonders" was evidently adopted on account of the effect produced on the beholder. Thus, when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea in a storm, and witnessed the sudden calm when He went up into the ship, "they were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered." But, as the emotion of wonder might be produced by other than miraculous events, it is found that the name "wonders," when used in respect to miracles, is coupled with the word "signs,"—"signs *and* wonders." The miracle is a *sign* as well as wonder; that is, it betokens the presence and working of supernatural power. Miracles considered as signs are regarded as seals of power, witnessing to the person performing them that he acts by authority from God. When the Jews demanded of Christ a proof of the authority He had for His doings and claims, they said, "What *sign* showest thou?" "We would see a *sign* from thee." They "desired Him that He would show them a *sign* from heaven." In many instances, miracles are mentioned as *powers* or *mighty works*, such as can be performed only by the agency of God. "Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His *mighty works* were done." Three words are employed in the New Testament to express the idea of miracles; viz., *wonders, signs, powers*, or *mighty works*. Another term employed by John to signify miracles is simply *works*. Thus Christ says, "The *works* that I do bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." (See also John x. 25, 32, 38; xiv. 11.)

It has been assumed that what is regarded as a miracle does not differ essentially from any process in the ordinary course of Nature. For example, it may be said that the growths and ordinary phenomena in the physical world are as much the result of powers which we cannot trace, as are the healing of the sick, the restoring of sight to the blind, and the control of the elements, recorded as miracles in the gospel. It is not proposed to discuss this point. Suffice it to say, in the words of Dr. Trench, that "an extraordinary divine causality belongs to the essence of the miracle, powers of God other than those which have always been working; such, indeed, as most seldom or never have been working until now. The unresting activity of God, which at other times hides and conceals itself behind the veil of what we term natural laws, does, in the miracle, unveil itself: it steps out from its concealment, and the hand which works is laid bare. Besides and beyond the ordinary operations of Nature, higher powers intrude, and make themselves felt even at the very springs and sources of her power." Miracles have sometimes been treated as *violations* of a natural law; but, while they are *beyond* and *above* Nature as we know and see it, they are not a *violation* of Nature, or contrary to it.

The credibility of miracles has, from the earliest ages of the Christian Church, been assailed. Talent, learning, and philosophy have combined their forces to destroy the evidence on which the historic reality of miracles is based; but every assault has been so ably and manfully met, that their credibility has been triumphantly vindicated. They have been reported to us by writers whom we have good reasons for believing to have been not ordinary historians, but persons specially

assisted by the Divine Spirit for the purpose of giving a correct account of the ministry of our Lord and His apostles. If human testimony can, under any circumstances, be accepted as reliable and truthful, that of the evangelists, as contained in the Gospels, touching the miracles of our Lord, is entitled to be so received and credited.

The miracles of Christ, and those of the Old Testament, afford, says Dr. Trench, many interesting points of comparison; and of a comparison equally instructive, whether we trace the points of likeness or unlikeness which exist between them. Thus, to note the first remarkable difference, we find oftentimes the holy men of the old covenant bringing, if one may venture so to speak, hardly, and with difficulty, the wonder-work to the birth. There is sometimes a momentary pause, a seeming uncertainty about the issue; while the miracles of Christ are accomplished with the highest ease. He speaks, and it is done. Thus Moses must plead and struggle with God, "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee," ere the plague of leprosy is removed from his sister; but Christ heals a leper by His touch. Elijah stretches himself thrice on the child, and cries unto the Lord, and painfully wins back its life. Christ, on the other hand, shows Himself the Lord of the living and the dead, raising the dead with as much ease as He performed the commonest transactions of life. While the miracles of holy men were ever done in the name of and with the attribution of the glory to another, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which *He* will show you," "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk," His are ever wrought in His own name and as in His own power: "*I will* ; be thou clean." "Thou deaf and dumb spirit, *I* charge thee come out of him." "Young man, *I* say unto thee, Arise."

There is a very perceptible difference in the character of the miracles of the two covenants. Those of the old wear oftentimes a severe aspect. They are miracles, indeed, of God's grace, but yet also miracles of the law,—of that law which worketh wrath. Miracles of the law, they preserve a character that accords with the law; being, oftentimes, fearful outbreaks of God's anger against the unrighteousness of men: such, for instance, as are the signs and wonders in Egypt, many of those in the desert, and some which the later prophets wrought; though there are many which are of a milder aspect. The miracles of Christ are all works of mercy and grace.

The region in which the miracles of the Old Testament chiefly move is that of external nature. They are the cleaving of the sea or a river, the yawnings of the earth, fire falling from heaven, and such as these. In the New Testament, the sphere of man's life is that in which miracles are wrought. The mighty works of our Lord, though they bear not on their front the imposing character which did those of the Old Testament, yet contain higher and deeper truths. They are eminently miracles of the incarnation of the Son of God, who had taken our flesh, and, taking, would heal it.

A question that has occupied the attention of theologians, especially those who have dwelt on the evidences of divine revelation, has reference to the place and

importance which should be given to *miracles*. During the last two hundred years, a more important place has been assigned to them than was the case in the earlier marshalling of proofs for Christianity. During this period, till recently, undue prominence has been given to the evidence furnished by miracles to the neglect of the more conclusive and satisfactory *internal* evidence contained in the truths and spiritual power by which the gospel witnesses to its divine origin and authority. The stupendous fact of Christianity, and the *CHRISTENDOM* which it underlies, may be safely accepted as a standing miracle of its divinity. "The mighty changes which Christianity has wrought in the earth; the divine fruits which it has everywhere borne; the new creations it has produced; the way in which it has taken its place in the world, not as a forcible intruder, but finding all that world's pre-established harmonies ready to greet and welcome it, ready to give it play and room; philosophy and art and science practically confessing that only under it could they attain their highest perfection, that in something they had all been dwarfed and stunted and insufficient before,—in these things there is enough to proclaim its origin more than human. From such a Christianity, pervading as it has done the civilized world, and as it now shows itself, it is fair to argue back to a Christ such as the Church receives as the only adequate cause."—*Trench*.

Still, it may be maintained that miracles occupy an important place in the array of proofs on which we rest our faith in the gospel of Christ. They constitute one of the strong pillars by which the fabric of our faith and hopes is sustained. We should miss them if they were expunged from inspired history. From the circumstances involved in both the Old and the New Dispensations, from the purposes to be answered by these dispensations, it would be expected, nay, required, that such mighty works would be forthcoming as are recorded in the sacred narratives; and, in respect to Christ, it might be asked, had He worked no miracles, Why did He give no signs that He came to connect the visible with the invisible world? Why did He nothing to break the yoke of custom and experience? nothing to show men that the constitution which he pretended to reveal has a true foundation? Why should He claim to be the Life, and yet Himself helpless in the encounter with death? Well might it have been demanded as a condition of faith, that He who claimed to be the Redeemer of men should show Himself mighty not only in word but in works.

The miracles of the New Testament, setting aside those wrought by Christ, appear to have been worked by a power conferred upon particular persons, according to a regular law, by virtue of which that power was ordinarily transmitted from one person to another; and, after Christ, the only persons authorized to *transmit* that power were the *apostles*. One or two cases excepted, miraculous gifts were conferred only by the laying-on of the hands of the *apostles*. By this arrangement, it appears very evident that a provision was made for the ceasing of the dispensation of miracles within a limited period; because, on the death of the last of the apostles, the ordinary channels would be stopped through which such gifts were transmitted to the Church. The great end of miracles having been

attained during the apostolic age, there would be no further necessity for their continuance. Hence no subsequent claims to the possession of miraculous power are entitled to our belief.

Dr. Lange has given an analysis of the miracles of the gospel, in his Commentary on Matthew, from which the profound significance as well as end of the mighty works of Christ are revealed. He classes them in the following order:—

I. MIRACLES OF THE WORDS AND OF FULFILMENT.

1. Miraculous birth of Christ to a spiritual, human life in the world. He *is* of the Holy Ghost.
2. Christ miraculously attains to full consciousness of His calling as the Redeemer, at His baptism in Jordan, and is glorified from above. He *has* the Holy Spirit as a spiritual power.
3. Transfiguration of the Lord on the Mount. He *reveals* the Holy Ghost, and shines in the light of the Spirit.
4. The resurrection of the Lord. Transition to the second and heavenly life of man. Christ is glorified, and *reigns* in the Holy Ghost.
5. Ascent of Christ into heaven. Christ rules far and near.
6. The outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon His disciples. He *sends* the Holy Ghost.
7. Return of Christ to judgment.

II. MIRACLES OF DEED.

1. The miraculous birth of Christ is the regeneration of humanity. Hence it is the power of regenerating, of *awakening the dead* and *restoring the sick*. Jesus walking on the sea. Power of the Spirit over nature.
 2. Glimpse into heaven. Into the hearts (Nathanael); into the depths (the tribute penny, the draught of fishes); into the future (the colt). Miracles of judgment and deliverance. Deliverances in the sphere of mind and of nature. *Conversions, casting out of evil spirits*. Symbolical miracles of nature, both in judgment and deliverance. The calming of the storm.
 3. Miracles of transfiguration. The disciples sharing the heavenly rapture. The marriage of Cana. The miraculous feeding of the multitude. *Bread and wine in the kingdom of Heaven*.
 4. Christ raising the dead. New spiritual life. The maid on her *death-bed*. The young man in the *coffin*. Lazarus in the *grave*. Movement in the world of spirits at His resurrection.
 5. Miraculous cures at a distance.
 6. Anointing of His people; of believing humanity. Speaking with new tongues. Spread of His wondrous power in the life of Christianity.
 7. The withered fig-tree. The apostles sent into all the world.
- The foregoing analysis by Dr. Lange is illustrated in his expository remarks on the several miracles contained in his commentary. To that work, the reader is

referred for brief comments on the miracles of the gospel. But, for a more elaborate and a very instructive discussion and exposition of the great subject of miracles, the work of Dr. Trench (from which much of what is said in this article has been derived) is recommended to the Bible student. The following catalogue of Christ's miracles is taken from his notes:—

1. Water made Wine. (John ii. 1-11.)
2. The Healing of the Nobleman's Son. (John iv. 46-50.)
3. The First Miraculous Draught of Fishes. (Luke v. 1-11.)
4. The Stilling of the Tempest. (Matt. viii. 23-27.)
5. The Demoniacs of Gadara cured. (Matt. viii. 28-34.)
6. The Raising of Jairus' Daughter. (Matt. ix. 18-26.)
7. The Woman with an Issue of Blood. (Luke viii. 43-48.)
8. The Opening of the Eyes of Two Blind Men. (Matt. ix. 27-31.)
9. The Healing of a Paralytic. (Matt. ix. 1-9.)
10. The Cleansing of the Leper. (Matt. viii. 1-4.)
11. The Healing of the Centurion's Servant. (Matt. viii. 5-13.)
12. The Demoniac in the Synagogue of Capernaum. (Mark i. 23-28.)
13. The Healing of Simon's Wife's Mother. (Matt. viii. 14-17.)
14. The Raising of the Widow's Son. (Luke vii. 11-16.)
15. The Healing of the Impotent Man at Bethesda. (John v. 1-16.)
16. The Miraculous Feeding of Five Thousand. (Matt. xiv. 15-21.)
17. The Walking on the Sea. (Matt. xiv. 23-33.)
18. The Opening the Eyes of One Born Blind. (John ix.)
19. The Restoring of the Man with a Withered Hand. (Matt. xii. 9-13.)
20. The Woman with the Spirit of Infirmary. (Luke xiii. 10-17.)
21. The Healing of a Man with the Dropsy. (Luke xiv. 1-6.)
22. The Cleansing of the Ten Lepers. (Luke xvii. 11-19.)
23. The Healing of the Daughter of the Syrophenician Woman. (Matt. xv. 21-28.)
24. The Healing of One Deaf and Dumb. (Mark vii. 31-37.)
25. The Miraculous Feeding of Four Thousand. (Matt. xv. 32-39.)
26. The Opening the Eyes of One Blind at Bethesda. (Mark viii. 22-26.)
27. The Healing of the Lunatic Child. (Matt. xvii. 14-21.)
28. The Stater in the Fish's Mouth. (Matt. xvii. 24-27.)
29. The Raising of Lazarus. (John xi. 1-54.)
30. The Opening the Eyes of Two Blind Men near Jericho. (Matt. xx. 29-34.)
31. The Withering of the Fruitless Fig-Tree. (Matt. xxi. 17-22.)
32. The Healing of Malchus' Ear. (Luke xxii. 49-51.)
33. The Second Miraculous Draught of Fishes. (John xxi. 1-23.)

These mighty works of Jesus are instructive and impressive, as witnessing to His gospel, as works of love, as seals of His power, as rays of His divine glory. The study of them is fitted to strengthen our faith in Him as the Saviour mighty to save.

BIBLE CHRONOLOGY.

Our Bible Chronology is a subject involved in confusion and perplexity. Learned men and antiquarians have been laborious in critical investigations for a solution of the existing difficulties, but have thus far failed of reaching any very satisfactory results.

What has contributed to this chronological confusion is the fact that the events of sacred history, as recorded in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, are not given in the order of their occurrence. Hence, it becomes a more difficult work to adjust our Bible Chronology. Another source of existing perplexity is the fact that the three existing versions of Holy Scripture, viz., the *Hebrew*, the *Samaritan Pentateuch*, and the *Greek Septuagint*, have each a different chronology, showing a discrepancy of hundreds of years between the creation of man and the birth of Christ. The greater discrepancy is between the Hebrew Version and the Greek Septuagint. According to ABP. USHER, who adopts the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures, the period between the creation of man and the birth of Christ is 4004 years. According to DR. HALES, who advocates the Septuagint chronology, this period embraces 5411 years, a difference of 1407 years, as compared with the computation of Usher.

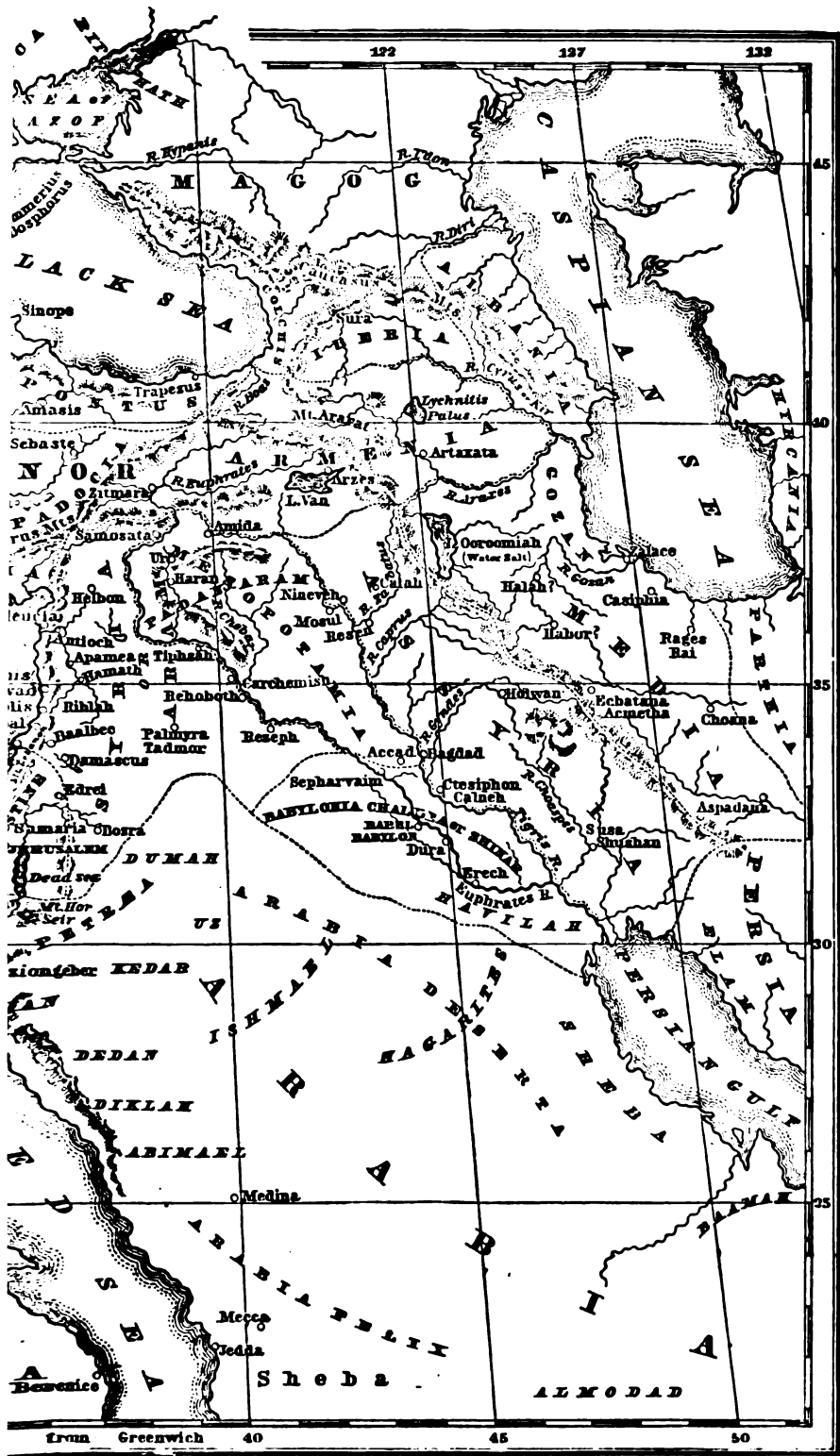
Various theories have been adopted for the purpose of accounting for the chronological discrepancy between the Hebrew version and the Greek Septuagint. There are plausible reasons for supposing that the translators of the Septuagint, being Jews, and living in Egypt, corrupted the chronology of their own Scriptures, influenced by motives of national vanity, in order to extend the antiquity of their sacred records, and of their nation, so as to equal, or approximate unto the high antiquity claimed for the Egyptian chronicles, and the remote date of their national organization. But this is not the place to discuss the causes of these chronological discrepancies, nor would such discussion be very satisfactory.

It is admitted that, in respect to the probability of accuracy arising from the state of the text, the Hebrew has the advantage. That text is, therefore, followed in the authorized version of our English Bible; and the chronology, as therein given according to the learned Usher, is accepted as the most reliable of any among the conflicting systems which different chronologists, ancient and modern,

have advocated. It is not claimed that in existing circumstances entire accuracy as to dates is obtained. All that can reasonably be expected is an approximation to chronological accuracy in the dates which are given.

In the preparation of the following table, the general plan adopted is that appended by Dr. Dewar, Principal of the University at Aberdeen, to his enlarged and improved edition of Stackhouse's Biblical works, as edited and published in Glasgow, 1842. To make it more full and satisfactory, it has been supplemented by additions selected from original sources, and from a variety of chronological articles to which the editor has had access. The aid furnished by these articles is hereby acknowledged. The Table, thus prepared, covers the same period as that embraced in the History of the Bible, to which it is appended.



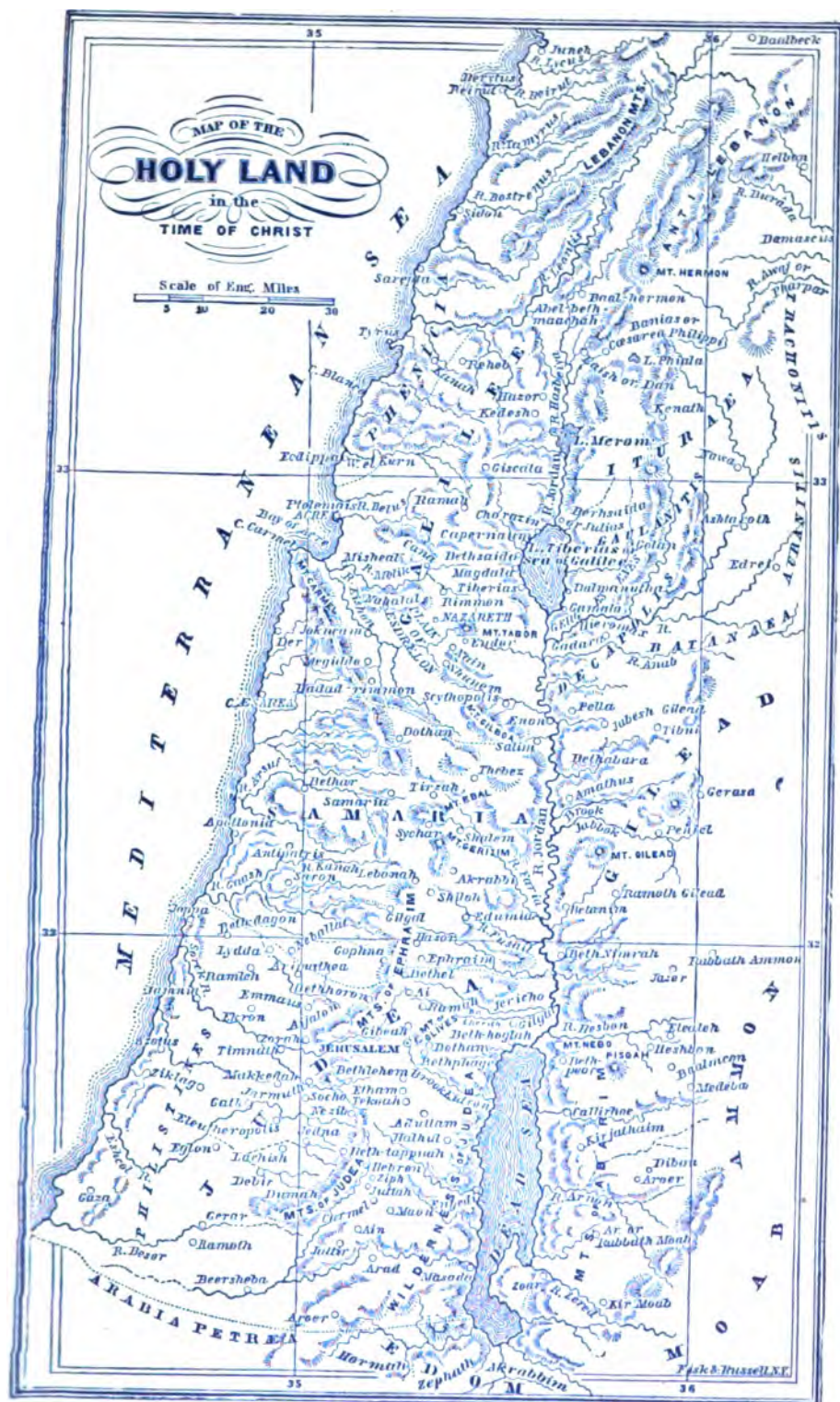


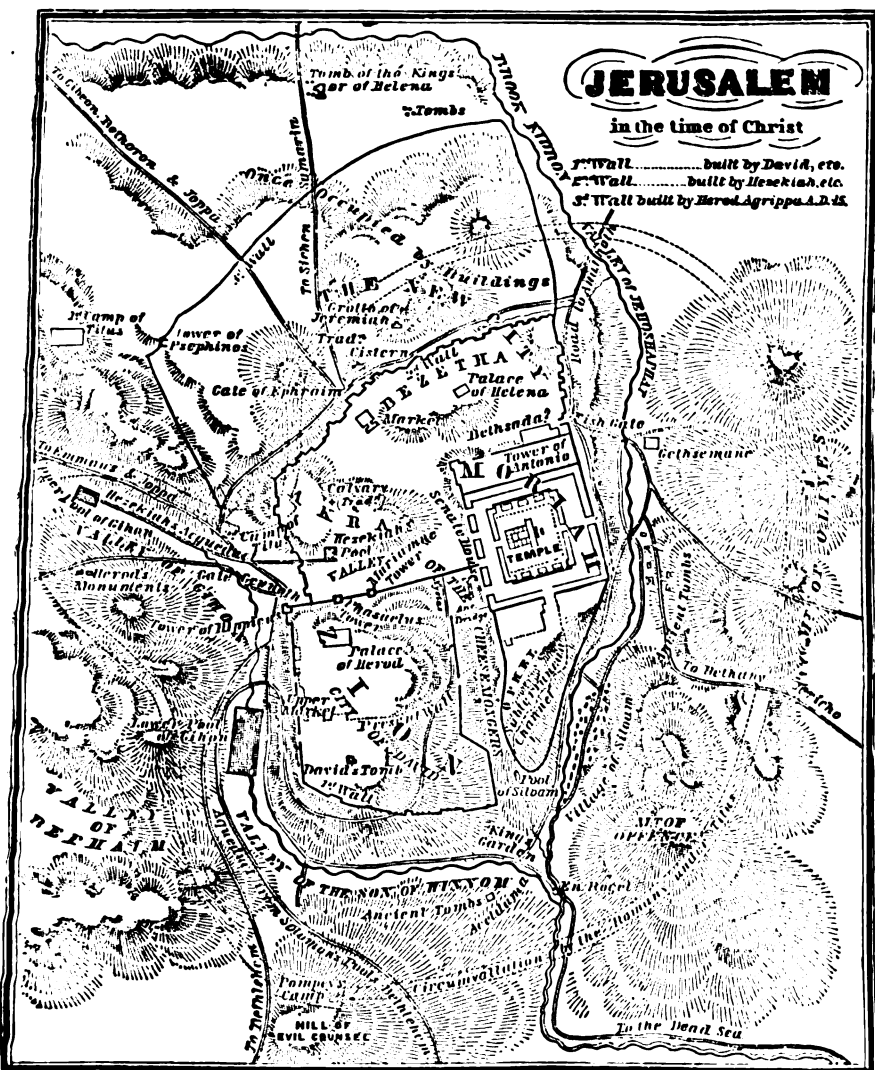
MAP OF THE HOLY LAND in the TIME OF DAVID

THE TWELVE TRIBES

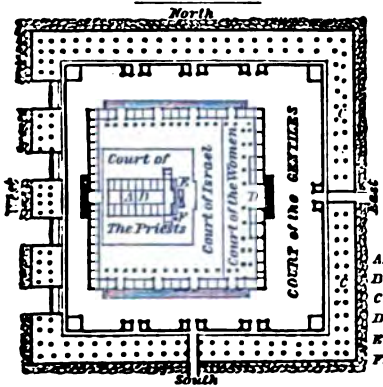
- I. Judah.
- II. Simeon.
- III. Benjamin.
- IV. Dan.
- V. Ephraim.
- VI. Manasseh.
- VII. Issachar.
- VIII. Zebulun.
- IX. Asher.
- X. Naphtali.
- XI. Gad.
- XII. Reuben.



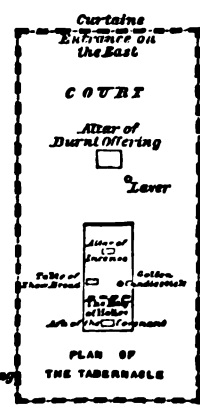




PLAN OF THE TEMPLE
in the time of Christ.



- A. The Holy of Holies
- B. The Holy Place
- C. Solomon's Porch
- D. The Gate Beautiful
- E. Altar of Burnt Offering
- F. The Brazen Laver



CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

NOTE.—Such events as are derived from secular history, are given in *italics*, to distinguish them readily from those of Biblical origin, so far as the inspired History extends.

PERIOD I.

From the Creation to the Deluge, according to Usher, as adopted in the English version of the Bible, 1656 years.

	B. C.	A. M.
The creation of our first parents.....	4004	1
The fall of Adam and promise of a Saviour.....		....
The birth of Cain, Adam's eldest son.....	4001	8
The birth of Abel, Adam's second son.....	4000	4
The murder of Abel, and the punishment of Cain.....	3876	128
The birth of Seth, son of Adam.....	3874	130
The birth of Enos, son of Seth.....	3769	235
The birth of Cainan, son of Enos.....	3678	325
The birth of Mahalaleel, son of Cainan.....	3609	395
The birth of Israel, son of Mahalaleel.....	3544	460
The birth of Enoch, son of Israel.....	3382	622
The birth of Methuselah, son of Enoch.....	3317	687
The birth of Lamech, son of Methuselah.....	3180	874
The death of Adam, aged 930 years.....	3074	980
The translation of Enoch, aged 365 years.....	3017	987
The death of Seth, aged 912 years.....	2962	1042
The birth of Noah, son of Lamah.....	2948	1056
The death of Enos, aged 905 years.....	2864	1140
The death of Cainan, aged 910 years.....	2769	1235
The death of Mahalaleel, aged 895 years.....	2714	1290
The death of Israel, aged 962 years.....	2582	1422
Noah warned by God of the future deluge, and commanded to build an ark.....	2468	1536
The birth of Japheth, eldest son of Noah.....	2448	1556
The birth of Shem, second son of Noah.....	2446	1558
The birth of Ham, third son of Noah.....	2444	1560

	B. C.	A. M.
Death of Lamech, father of Noah, aged 777 years.....	2353	1651
Death of Methuselah, aged 969 years, the oldest man.....	2343	1656
The same year, Noah, being 600 years old, the flood comes upon the earth, and he enters the ark.		

PERIOD II.

From the Deluge to the calling of Abraham, 426 years and 6 months.

	B. C.	A. M.
Noah with his family, &c., leave the ark.....	2347	1657
The rainbow a pledge of security.....	.....	.....
The birth of Arphaxad, son of Shem.....	2346	1658
Noah plants a vineyard, &c.....	2341	1663
The birth of Salah, son of Arphaxad.....	2311	1693
The birth of Eber or Heber, son of Salah, from whom it was supposed the Hebrews derived their name.....	2281	1723
The birth of Peleg, son of Eber.....	2247	1757
The building of the tower of Babel, the confusion of languages, and the dispersion of mankind.....	2234	1770
<i>Beginning of the Egyptian dynasties, and the Assyrian monarchy....</i>	2233	1771
The birth of Reu, son of Peleg.....	2217	1787
The birth of Serug, son of Reu.....	2185	1819
<i>Early astronomical calculations of the Babylonians about this time.</i>		
The birth of Nahor, son of Serug.....	2155	1849
The birth of Terah, son of Nahor.....	2126	1878
The death of Nimrod, founder of Babylon, who is succeeded by Belus	2061	1943
The birth of Haran, son of Terah.....	2056	1948
<i>Dynasty of the Hyksos, or Shepherd Kings, in Lower Egypt, about this time.</i>		
<i>The death of Belus, succeeded by Ninus, as king of Assyria.....</i>	2035	1969
The death of Noah, aged 950 years.....	1998	2006
Beginning of the post-diluvian apostacy.....	.....	.....
The birth of ABRAM, son of Terah.....	1996	2008
<i>The death of Ninus, succeeded by his wife, Semiramis.....</i>	1987	2017
The birth of Sarai, afterwards wife of Abram.....	1986	2018
<i>The death of Semiramis, Queen of Assyria.....</i>	1945	2059
The call of Abram from Ur of the Chaldeans to Haran in Mesopotamia, where his father died, aged 205 years.....	1917	2083
Mesopotamia, called by the Hebrews <i>Padan-Aram</i> , located between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, was the first abode of men before and after the flood.		

PERIOD III.

From the calling of Abraham to the Exodus of the Israelites, 430 years.

	B. C.	A. M.
ABRAHAM called the second time to leave Haran and go to Canaan, being 75 years old.....	1921	2093
<i>Eighteenth Dynasty of Egyptian kings, during which the Israelites sojourned in Egypt until their exodus under Moses.</i>		

	B. C.	A. M.
Abraham with his wife goes to Egypt.....	1920	2084
He returns from Egypt to Canaan		
Abraham and Lot separate, the former going to Mamre, the latter to Sodom.....	1920	2084
Chedorlaomer and his allies make war upon the king of Sodom and take Lot prisoner, but they are pursued and defeated by Abraham	1918	2091
Melchisedek receives tithes from him and blesses him.....		
God makes a covenant with Abraham		
The birth of Ishmael, son of Abraham and Hagar.....	1910	2094
God renews his covenant with Abram, changing his name to ABRAHAM, institutes circumcision, promises Isaac by Sarah his wife	1897	2107
Abraham entertains angels, is informed by them of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, intercedes for these cities, their overthrow		
Abraham sojourns in Gerar, where Abimelech, the king, takes Sarah to wife, but restores her.....		
The birth of Isaac in the 100th year of Abraham	1896	2108
Abraham sends away Hagar and her son Ishmael	1892	2112
He is commanded of God to sacrifice Isaac, his son.....	1871	2133
Sarah dies at Hebron, aged 127 years.....	1859	2145
The marriage of Isaac and Rebecca.....	1856	2148
The birth of Jacob and Esau, Isaac being 60 years old.....	1836	2168
Death of Abraham, aged 175 years.....	1818	2186
<i>Kingdom of Argos founded about this time.</i>		
Bela, the first king of Edom, begins to reign	1740	2264
Isaac blesses Jacob, who departs to Padan-aram.....	1760	2240
Jacob marries Leah, daughter of Laban.....	1758	2251
Esau marries two Canaanitish women.....	1796	2208
Jacob makes Joseph his favorite, his dreams, is sold as a slave to Egypt.....	1728	2276
Joseph cast into prison.....	1719	2285
The death of Isaac, aged 180 years.....	1716	2288
Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams, and is made the first ruler under the king.....	1715	2289
Commencement of seven years' famine.....	1708	2296
Jacob sends his sons to Egypt to buy corn.....	1707	2297
He sends them again with Benjamin, when Joseph makes himself known to them.....	1706	2298
Jacob and family go down to Egypt.....	1706	2298
Jacob having blessed his sons, dies in Egypt, aged 147.....	1689	2315
The death of Joseph, aged 110 years.....	1685	2369
<i>Revolution in Egypt, the shepherd kings expelled, and the Theban dynasty by successive kings reigns during the sojourn and bondage of the Israelites to their exodus under Rameses I., B. C. 1491....</i>		
The destruction of the male Hebrew children ordered.....	1578	2481
Birth of Moses and his adoption by Pharaoh's daughter.....	1571	2488
About this time Athens is founded by Cecrops.....	1556	2448
Moses kills an Egyptian and flies to Midian.....	1531	2473
Amenophis, son of Rameses Miamun, reigns over Egypt.....	1510	2494

God appears to Moses in the burning bush, and sends him to deliver Israel.....	B. C.	A. M.
	1491	2513
Pharaoh refuses to release the Israelites, increases their burdens, is compelled by the plagues inflicted on his people to let the oppressed people go.....	1491	2513

PERIOD IV.

From the Exodus of the Israelites to their entrance into Canaan, 40 years.

	B. C.	A. M.
The Israelites march from Ramases to the Red Sea.....	1491	2513
Overthrow of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea.....		
Their arrival at Sinai, the giving of the law, consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood.....		
Moses delays to descend from the mount, and the people make and worship a golden calf; he shows his displeasure by breaking the tables of the law, destroying the idol, and putting 3,000 idolaters to death.....		
Moses is called again to ascend the mount, and receives from God two other tables of the law.....		
The tabernacle completed and erected.....	1490	2513
The conduct of Miriam and Aaron punished.....		
From Paran twelve spies are sent to explore the land of Canaan, their report, the people murmur, they are doomed to fall in the wilderness.....	1491	2513
Rebellion of Korah and his company, their punishment, many thousands of the people perish with the plague on account of their murmuring.....	1471	2533
The Israelites arrive at Kadesh, the 40th year of their departure from Egypt.....	1451	2553
Moses, by God's direction, brings water from a rock.....		
Death of Aaron at Mount Hor, aged 123 years.....		
The plague of fiery serpents, the brazen serpent.....		
The Israelites enter Moab, defeat Sihon and Og.....		
Balaam sent to curse Israel, is constrained to bless them.....		
The men of Israel, seduced by the women of Moab and Midian, and 24,000 consequently perish.....		
The Israelites arrive at the plains of Moab.....		
Moses, informed of his approaching death, recapitulates the laws, &c., blesses the tribes, ascends Nebo and dies, aged 120.....		
Joshua confirmed as his successor, sends spies to Jericho, conducts the people over Jordan.....		
Jericho taken, and the inhabitants slain.....		
<i>About this time Troy was founded by Seamander, and the Olympic games were first celebrated at Elis in Greece.</i>		

PERIOD V.

From the entrance of the Israelites into the land of Canaan to the building of Solomon's Temple, 447 years.

	B. C.	A. M.
Joshua, the successor of Moses, leads the Israelites in the conquest of Canaan.....	1451	2558
Disastrous battle at Ai, and its cause.....		
A division of the land commenced.....	1445	2559
The tabernacle set up in Shiloh.....	1444	2560
Joshua assembles all Israel, renews their covenant with God, counsels them, and dies, aged 110 years.....	1448	2561
Degeneracy of Israel begins to appear.....	1419	2585
The war of the Benjamites.....	1405	2599
Israelites in subjection to the king of Mesopotamia 8 years.....	1406	2598
<i>Minos, king of Crete, promulgates his laws</i>		
Othniel delivers Israel from the king of Mesopotamia, and governs the people 40 years.....	1405	2599
Israel is delivered into the hands of Eglon, king of Moab, whom they serve 18 years.....	1342	2662
<i>Isthmian games instituted by the king of Corinth</i>	1326	2678
Ehud slays Eglon, king of Moab, and delivers Israel.....	1325	2679
The Israelites relapse into idolatry, are delivered into the hand of Jabin as the punishment.....	1305	2699
Deborah and Barak deliver Israel.....	1296	2708
<i>The Assyrian empire founded about this time.</i>		
<i>Tyre founded by the Sidonians</i>	1252	2752
Gideon delivers Israel.....	1245	2759
Tola governs Israel 23 years.....	1232	2772
Jair succeeds Tola, and governs Israel 22 years.....	1209	2789
<i>About this time the Lydian kingdom begins.</i>		
<i>Semiramis marries Ninus</i>		
Jephtha's exploits and vow.....	1145	2859
<i>Troy taken by the Greeks about this time.</i>		
Samson's exploits, he pulls down the temple.....	1136	2887
The ark taken by the Philistines—death of Eli.....	1141	2863
The Lord reveals himself to Samuel in Shiloh.....	1145	2859
Samuel anoints Saul as king of Israel.....	1095	2909
Saul's inauguration in Gilgal.....		
Saul, for his rash sacrifice, is rejected of God.....	1098	2911
Samuel is sent to Bethlehem to anoint David.....	1068	2941
David slays Goliath.....		
Death of Samuel, the last of the Judges.....	1060	2944
David marries Abigail, formerly wife of Nobal.....		
Saul is slain on Mount Gilboa.....	1056	2948
David anointed king in Hebron.....		
Abner adheres to the son of Saul, but is defeated in an action with Joab, the general of David.....	1058	2951

	B. C.	A. M.
David establishes his dominion over all Israel.....	1048	2956
He takes the fortress of Zion and calls it the City of David.....	1047	2957
He brings the Ark of the Covenant to Zion.....	1045	2959
He purposes building a temple, but is directed by Nathan the prophet to leave it to his successor.....	1044	2960
David subdues the Philistines and other hostile nations.....	1040	2964
The adultery of David, and death of Uriah.....	1035	2969
David is reproved for his crime by Nathan.....	1034	2970
The birth of Solomon.....	1033	2971
The rebellion of Absalom, David's son.....	1021	2983
David numbers the people of Israel, and is punished.....	1017	2987
The birth of Rehoboam, son of Solomon.....	1016	2988
The death of David, aged 70, according to Josephus.....	1015	2989
Solomon succeeds to the throne of Israel.....	1014	2990
He lays the foundation of the temple.....	1012	2992
<i>Lacedemonian kingdom commenced about this time.</i>		

PERIOD VI.

From building of the Temple to the Babylonish Captivity, 400 years.

	B. C.	A. M.
The dedication of the Temple.....	1003	3001
The death of Solomon, and succession of Rehoboam.....	975	3029
Revolt of the ten tribes.....	...	...
Jeroboam, king of Israel, establishes idolatry.....	974	3030
The priests and pious Israelites join the kingdom of Judah.....	...	...
Shishak, king of Egypt, invades Judea.....	971	3033
Rehoboam dies, and is succeeded by Abijah.....	958	3046
Abijah conquers Jeroboam with great slaughter.....	957	3047
Asa succeeds Abijah, who reigns 40 years.....	955	3049
Jeroboam, king of Israel, succeeded by Nadab.....	954	3050
Nadab is slain by Baasha, who usurps the kingdom.....	953	3051
Asa conquers Zerah the Ethiopian, who invades Judea.....	941	3063
Omri, king of Israel, makes Samaria his capital.....	924	3080
Omri dies, and is succeeded by his son Ahab.....	918	3086
Jehoshaphat succeeds his father Asa, as king of Israel.....	914	3090
He reforms the religion of his kingdom.....	912	3092
Elijah predicts a famine, and is fed by ravens.....	910	3094
<i>Homer and Hesiod live about this time.</i>		
Elijah's challenge to the prophets of Baal.....	906	3098
Ahab, king of Israel, seizes the vineyard of Naboth.....	899	3105
He is slain at Ramoth Gilead, and succeeded by Ahaziah.....	897	3107
Jehoshaphat associates with him his son Jehoram in the government of Judah.....	892	3112
Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, introduces idolatry into Judah.....	888	3116
He dies of an incurable disease, and is succeeded by Ahaziah.....	885	3119
Jehu slays Jehoram, and reigns over the kingdom of Israel.....	884	3120

	B. C.	A. M.
Athaliah murders the royal family, except Joash, and usurps the throne of Judah.....		
Jehoids the priest anoints Joash king, and slays Athalia.....	878	3126
<i>Carthage is built by Queen Dido.....</i>	869	3135
The Ninevites repent at the preaching of Jonah.....	862	3142
Joash orders the repair of the temple.....	856	3148
Jehu dies, and is succeeded by his son Jehoahaz.....		
Zechariah, the priest, son of Jehoids, is stoned in the temple by order of Joash.....	840	3164
Joash, king of Judah, is murdered, and succeeded by Amaziah.....	839	3165
Amaziah, elated by his late victories, wages war with Jehoahash, king of Israel, and is taken prisoner.....	826	3178
Jehoahash dies, and is succeeded by his son, Jeroboam II.....	825	3179
<i>Death of Sardanapalus, and fall of the Assyrian empire.....</i>	820	3184
Amaziah, king of Judah, is slain, and is succeeded by Azariah.....	810	3194
Jeroboam II, after a reign of 41 years, dies.....	784	3220
After the death of Jeroboam II. an interregnum of 22 years.		
During his reign lived and prophesied Jonah, Hosea, and Amos.		
Zechariah, son of Jeroboam, obtains the kingdom.....	778	3221
He is killed by Shallum, who is soon killed by Menahem.....	772	3228
Menahem dies, and is succeeded by his son Pekahiah.....		
Pul, king of Assyria, invades and subdues Israel.....	771	3232
Uzziah, for attempting to burn incense, is smitten with leprosy.....	765	3239
Pekahiah, successor to Menahem, is killed by Pekah.....	755	3249
<i>Macedonian empire begins about this time.</i>		
Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, and Micah, prophesy.....		
<i>Rome founded about this time.</i>		
Ahaz succeeds his father Jotham, 17th year of Pekah.....	742	3262
Tiglath-Pilezer invades Israel, and carries away captives to Assyria.....	740	3264
Hoshea, having slain Pekah, king of Israel, reigns.....	730	3274
Tiglath-Pilezer dies, and is succeeded by Shalmanezzer, who invades Israel, and carries captive the ten tribes.....	721	3283
Shalmanezzer dies, and is succeeded by Sennacherib, who invades Judah.....	715	3289
Hezekiah's sickness and miraculous recovery.....	713	3291
Sennacherib invades Judah, and is suddenly destroyed.....	710	3294
His son, Erarhaddan, succeeds to the throne.....	706	3298
Hezekiah dies, and is succeeded by his son Manasseh.....	694	3310
Erarhaddan makes himself master of Babylon and re-unites the Assyrian and Babylonian empires.....	677	3327
He takes Manasseh prisoner, and carries him to Babylon.....	671	3333
Manasseh, on repentance, is restored to his kingdom.....		
He dies, and is succeeded by Ammon, his son.....	639	3365
Ammon is murdered, and his son, Josiah, reigns.....	637	3367
Josiah labors to reform abuses, and restore the true worship of God.....	630	3374
<i>About this time Philip succeeds to the throne of Macedon.</i>		
<i>Byzantium is built about this time.</i>		
Jeremiah begins to prophesy.....	624	3380

	B. C.	A. M.
<i>Nabopolassar reigns in Babylon 22 years.</i>	622	3382
<i>Psammetik I. reigns in Egypt about this time.</i>		
<i>He is succeeded by Neko II.</i>	609	3395
Josiah is slain in battle against Neko, king of Egypt, and is succeeded by Jehoahaz.	606	3398
Jehoiakin, in whose reign Habakkuk prophesied, reigns.		
Nineveh destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians.	612	3392
Nebuchadnezzar takes Jerusalem, and carries Daniel and his companions into Babylon.	602	3402
From this time, according to the common computation, the 70 years' captivity begins.		
Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and is consequently promoted to a high office in the government.	598	3406
Darius, the Mede, is born.	600	3404
Darius, the Mede, enters on his reign over the Chaldeans.	538	3466
Jechoniah, son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, is carried to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, with many Jews.	598	3406
Ezekiel is called to the prophetic office.	594	3410
Zedekiah, successor of Jechoniah, forms an alliance with the Egyptian king, Hophra, and revolts against Nebuchadnezzar.	592	3412
<i>Draco, the lawgiver of Athens, lives about this time.</i>		
Ezekiel prophesies in Babylon.	590	3414
Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem, takes the city, destroys it with the Temple, carries Zedekiah to Babylon, and sends the remaining inhabitants of Judea beyond the Euphrates. Thus ended the kingdom of Judah, 888 years from the secession.	586	3418
Obadiah prophesies at this time.		
<i>Solon, the lawgiver of Athens, about this time; also Anacharsis, Thales, and Æsop flourished.</i>		

PERIOD VII.

From the beginning of the Babylonish Captivity to the Birth of Christ, 586 years.

	B. C.	A. M.
Gedaliah is made governor of the people left in Judea, and is murdered	584	3420
Ezekiel prophesies in Chaldea, and foretells the restoration of the captive Jews.	587	3417
Tyre besieged by Nebuchadnezzar.	586	3418
Nebuchadnezzar erects a golden image, and by a decree requires for it universal worship.	580	3424
<i>Servius Tullus, king of Rome.</i>	578	3426
Nebuchadnezzar's dream of trouble, which Daniel interprets as portending great calamity.	570	3434
His singular insanity and restoration.	569	3435
He dies, and is succeeded by his son, Evilmerodach.	562	3442
He releases Jehoiachin from prison.	561	3443
He is slain, and succeeded by Neriglissar.	560	3444

	B. C.	A. M.
Belshazzar succeeds to the throne of Babylon.....	555	3449
Daniel's emblematical vision of four monarchies.....		
Croesus, the ally of Belshazzar, conquered by Cyrus, and taken prisoner	548	3446
Cyrus besieges Belshazzar in Babylon.....	541	3463
He takes Babylon, slays Belshazzar, and makes Cyaxares, or Darius, king of Babylon.....	538	3466
Daniel, envied by the nobles, is cast into the den of lions.....	537	3467
Cyrus succeeds Darius, as king of the Medo-Persian empire, and ends the captivity of the Jews in Babylon.....	536	3468
The remnant of the Jews return to Judea, and begin to restore Jeru- salem and the temple.....	535	3469
<i>Tarquin, the Proud, succeeds to the Roman throne.....</i>	534	3470
Cyrus dies, aged 70, and is succeeded by Ahasuerus.....	530	3474
Ahasuerus dies in Syria, and Artaxerxes usurps the Persian throne.	522	3482
Artaxerxes is slain, and Darius Hystaspes succeeds to the throne of Persia.....	521	3483
Zerubbabel and Joshua, encouraged by Haggai and Zechariah, en- gage in rebuilding the temple.....	520	3484
The temple finished and dedicated.....	516	3488
<i>Darius invades India.....</i>	506	3498
<i>The Persians wage war against the Greeks.....</i>	500	3504
<i>The Persians defeated with great loss at Marathon.....</i>	491	3513
<i>Darius dies, and is succeeded by his son, Xerxes.....</i>	487	3517
<i>Xerxes confirms unto the Jews the privileges which had been granted them by his father.....</i>	485	3519
<i>Herodotus, the historian, born.....</i>	484	3520
<i>Consular government established about this time in Rome.</i>		
<i>Xerxes, having relinquished his war against the Greeks, is slain, and is succeeded by Artaxerxes, Longimanus, the Ahasuerus of Esther....</i>	464	3540
Artaxerxes (Ahasuerus), being established in the throne of the em- pire, makes a great feast, he divorces Vashti, the queen.....	462	3542
Esther, the Jewish maiden, is made his queen.....	458	3546
Ezra is made governor of Judea, and begins a reform.....	456	3548
<i>First decemvirs at Rome.....</i>	454	3550
Haman's plot for the destruction of the Jews defeated.....	452	3552
Nehemiah sent as governor of Judea.....	448	3556
He rebuilds Jerusalem, and reforms existing evils.....	444	3560
Ezra collects and arranges a correct edition of the Scriptures.....		
Nehemiah, after an absence at the Persian court, returns to Judea under his second commission.....	428	3576
Artaxerxes dies, and is succeeded by his son, Xerxes, who is slain, and Darius Nothus reigns.....	424	3580
Malachi, the last of the prophets, prophesies at this time.		
Joiada succeeds his father Eliashib, as high priest.....		
Nehemiah, under his last commission, effects sundry reforms in Judea.....	409	3595

**THE ERA OF INSPIRED HISTORY ENDS ABOUT THIS TIME, AND
THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON IS FINISHED.**

	B. C.	A. M.
Darius Nothus dies, and is superceded by Artaxerxes Mnemon	405	3599
Socrates, the Athenian philosopher, is condemned to death for refusing to honor the gods of Athens	400	3604
Aristotle, the renowned philosopher, born	384	3620
Johanan succeeds to the high priesthood of the Jewish people	378	3631
Alexander II., king of Macedon, is murdered	370	3634
Johanan assassinates his brother Joshua in the temple, for which crime the nation is fined by the Persians	366	3638
Alexander the Great born in Macedonia	356	3648
Ochus, king of Persia, invades Egypt, and subjugates the whole country	350	3654
Philip, king of Macedon, is slain, and his son, Alexander the Great, succeeds to the throne	336	3668
He invades Asia, and obtains a victory over Darius	334	3670
He conquers Asia Minor, and gains a decisive battle with Darius at Issus	333	3671
He besieges Tyre, visits Jerusalem, conquers Egypt	332	3672
He passes the Euphrates, obtains another victory over Darius, and destroys the Medo-Persian empire	331	3673
The Greco-Macedonian empire, after a brief existence, is divided, on the death of Alexander	323	3681
A Jewish colony formed at Alexandria, Egypt	320	3684
Onias succeeds Jaddua in the high priesthood	321	3683
The kingdom of Alexander the Great is divided between four of his principal generals: Lysimachus, Cassander, Ptolemy, and Seleucus	301	3703
Onias dies, and is succeeded in the priesthood by Simon, the Just . .	300	3704
Cassander, who reigned over Macedonia and Greece, dies	298	3706
Simon, the Just, dies, and is succeeded by Eleazer, his brother, in the high priesthood	292	3712
Lysimachus adds to his dominions the kingdom of Macedon	286	3718
Ptolemy Lagus resigns his throne to his son, Ptolemy Philadelphus, and soon after dies	284	3720
Seleucus, having slain Lysimachus and seized his dominions, is himself slain by Ptolemy Ceraunus	280	3724
Antiochus Soter succeeds his father, Seleucus, to the throne of Syria	279	3725
The Hebrew Scriptures, by the authority of Ptolemy Philadelphus, are translated into Greek, and have since been known as the SEPTUAGINT	277	3727
Antiochus Soter dies, and is succeeded by Antiochus Theos	261	3743
Manasseh, the high-priest, is succeeded by Onias II	250	3754
Ptolemy Philadelphus is succeeded by his son, Ptolemy Euergetes . .	247	3757
Antiochus recalls his wife, Laodice, whom he had divorced in order to marry Berenice; but she poisons him and Berenice, and places on the throne her son, Seleucus Callinicus	246	3758

	B. C.	A. M.
Ptolemy revenges his sister's death by slaying Laodice.....	.....	.....
Demetrius, son of Antigonus, succeeds to the Macedonian throne...	248	3761
Seleucus, taken prisoner by the Parthians, dies, and is succeeded by his son, Seleucus Ceraunus	225	3779
Regulus, the Roman, taken prisoner	246	3758
Seleucus Ceraunus is poisoned, and his brother, Antiochus the Great, becomes his successor	223	3781
Ptolemy Philopater succeeds to the throne of Egypt.....	221	3783
The Temple of Janus shut about this time.....	.....	.....
Antiochus, having vanquished the forces of Ptolemy, makes himself master of Phœnicia and Galilee	218	3786
Onias II. succeeds his father, Simon II., as high priest.....	217	3787
Ptolemy Philopater, having gained a victory over Antiochus, goes to Jerusalem, and attempts to enter the Holy of Holies.....	.....	.....
He dies, and Ptolemy Epiphanes succeeds to his throne.....	204	3800
Antiochus unites with the king of Macedon in a plan to divide be- tween them the dominions of Ptolemy.....	203	3801
The Egyptians seek the aid of Rome, and M. Emilius Lepidus is sent to Egypt as an ambassador.....	201	3803
Hannibal encourages Antiochus to make war against the Romans..	195	3809
Simon II., the high priest, dies, and Onias III. succeeds him.....	.....	.....
Antiochus marries his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy Epiphanes, king of Egypt.....	193	3811
His expedition against the Romans is a failure, and he is driven back by Lucius Scipio, the Roman general.....	190	3814
Antiochus is slain, while attempting to rob a temple, and is suc- ceeded by Seleucus Philopater.....	187	3817
Ptolemy Epiphanes, being put to death, is succeeded by his young son, Philometer	180	3824
Heliodorus attempts to rob the temple at Jerusalem, but is prevented by supernatural interposition.....	176	3828
Antiochus, brother of Seleucus Philopater, obtains the kingdom of Syria by strategy	175	3829
Jason, by a bribe, procures the high priesthood, and thus causes the removal of his brother, Onias III.....	.....	.....
Jason is supplanted in his office by Menelaus.....	172	3832
Antiochus gains a great victory over the forces of Ptolemy, near Pe- lusium, in Egypt.....	171	3833
He soon makes himself master of Egypt.....	170	3834
Ptolemy Phiscon is made king of Egypt.....	.....	.....
Antiochus again invades Egypt, but is compelled to return by the Roman intervention.....	168	3836
Enraged by this reverse, he sends Apollonius, one of his generals, to complete the destruction of Jerusalem.....	.....	.....
He commences his persecution of the Jews on account of their re- ligion; the temple is desecrated.....	.....	.....
Mattathias and his sons take up arms against him.....	.....	.....
The kingdom of Macedon is ended by the Roman power .....	.....	.....

	B. C.	A. M.
The Maccabean brothers suffer martyrdom.....	167	3837
Judas, son of Mattathias, obtains splendid victories over the armies of Antiochus Epiphanes.....	166	3838
He recovers Jerusalem, and restores the temple worship.....	165	3839
Miserable death of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the succession of his son, Antiochus Eupator, to the throne.....	164	3840
Demetrius Soter, son of Seleucus Philopater, escapes from Rome, kills Antiochus, and seizes on the throne.....	163	3842
Demetrius Soter sends his general, Nicanor, against the Jews, who, with his army, was defeated by Judas.....	161	3843
Judas is slain in battle with Bacchidea, and is succeeded by Jonathan, his brother.....	.....	.....
Jonathan is promoted by Balas to the high priesthood.....	158	3851
The Asmonean dynasty is established in Judea.....	.....	.....
Demetrius Soter is slain in battle by Balas, who succeeds him to the throne of Syria.....	152	3852
Balas, being slain, is succeeded by Demetrius Nicator.....	145	3859
Ptolemy Philometer dies, and is succeeded by his brother, Ptolemy Physcon.....	.....	.....
Jonathan, after brilliant successes in war against Demetrius, is treacherously murdered.....	144	3860
Simon, his brother, becomes his successor as the leader of the Jews.....	.....	.....
He secures a recognition of the independence of Judea, and a guarantee for the same from Rome.....	141	3863
Carthage is destroyed by Scipio, the Roman.....	.....	.....
Antiochus Sidetes is made king of Syria, Demetrius being held a prisoner by the Parthians.....	140	3864
Simon and two sons are murdered by his son-in-law, Ptolemy, governor in Jericho, and is succeeded by his son, John Hyrcanus..	135	3869
Spain becomes a province of Rome.....	134	3870
Tiberius Gracchus, a Roman tribune.....	.....	.....
Hyrcanus, son of Simon Maccabeus, being invested with the office of high-priest and general-in-chief, establishes his government firmly in Judea.....	135	3869
Antiochus Gryphas conquers the usurper Zebina and ascends the throne.....	123	3881
Ptolemy Physcon dies, leaving the kingdom of Egypt in the hands of his queen, Cleopatra.....	117	3887
Aristobulus and Antigonus, sons of Hyrcanus, conquer and devastate Samaria.....	109	3895
Aristobulus causes his brother, Antigonus, to be killed, and he takes possession of the government.....	.....	.....
Aristobulus dies, and his brother, Alexander Janneus, succeeds to the government of Judea.....	106	3898
Jugurtha, the Numidian king, defeated in a decisive battle with the Romans.....	.....	.....
Rome distracted by the <i>Social War</i> , so called, which cost the lives of 800,000 men.....	91	3913

	B. C.	A. M.
Commencement of the Mithridatic war.....	89	3915
Sylla invested with the power of dictator.....	82	3922
Janneus dies, and is succeeded by his wife, Alexandra, who makes her son, Hyrcanus, high-priest	79	3925
Hyrcanus is dispossessed of his office by Aristobulus.....	70	3934
Pompey assumes the command of the Roman army, and reduces Syria to a province.....	65	3939
Ptolemy Auletes made king of Egypt.....	..	....
Pompey supports the claims of Hyrcanus against Aristobulus, and makes Judea tributary.....	63	3941
The conspiracy of Catiline, and its exposure by Cicero .....	..	....
The first Roman triumvirate instituted.....	59	3945
Ptolemy Auletes dies, and is succeeded by his daughter, Cleopatra, and his eldest son	51	3953
Pompey conquered at the battle of Pharsalia, by Julius Cæsar, and soon after is murdered	48	3956
Antipater appointed by Cæsar governor of Judea.....	47	3957
Julius Cæsar is murdered in the Roman Senate.....	44	3960
Antipater is poisoned, and succeeded by Herod and Phasael	43	3961
The Parthians gain possession of Jerusalem, and place Antigonus, son of Aristobulus, on the throne.....	40	3964
Herod, making interest at Rome, is constituted king of Judea.....	..	....
Herod takes Jerusalem by siege, and establishes his authority over Judea, which he retains 34 years.....	37	3967
Octavius conquers Antony, and reduces Egypt to a Roman province	30	3974
He assumes the name of AUGUSTUS CÆSAR, and becomes emperor of Rome.....	27	3977
Herod begins to rebuild the temple.....	17	3987

PERIOD VIII.

From the Birth of Christ to the completion of the Canon of the New Testament.

	B. C.
<i>Augustus declared Emperor by the Roman Senate</i>	27
<i>The Septuagint in general use among the Jews</i>
Luke ii. 1..... <i>Edict of Augustus</i>	5
<i>Herod plunders the tomb of David of a great amount of treasure</i>	5
" i..... <i>Birth of John the Baptist</i>	5
" ii..... <i>Birth of Jesus Christ, before the common era called Anno Domini</i>	4
" ii..... <i>Presentation in the Temple</i>	4
Matt. ii..... <i>Arrival of the Magi</i>	4
" ii..... <i>Flight into Egypt</i>	4
<i>Murder of the male infants of Bethlehem by Herod</i>	3
" ii..... <i>Death of Herod, Governor of Judea, at Jericho</i>	3
<i>Archelaus succeeds his father in Judea</i>	2
<i>Birth of Seneca, celebrated rhetorician and philosopher, at Cordova</i>	A. D. 2
Luke ii..... <i>Jesus accompanies Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem</i>	8
<i>About this time arose Judas of Galilee</i>	8
<i>The Roman legions, under Varus, defeated by the Germans. Varus kills himself</i>	9
<i>Marcus Ambivius made Procurator of Judea</i>	10
<i>The Temple at Jerusalem polluted by Samaritans, who entered it by night, and strewed there dead men's bones</i>	14
<i>Death of the Emperor Augustus at Nola</i>	14
<i>Tiberius, emperor</i>	14-37
<i>Ovid, Roman poet, died in banishment</i>	17
<i>Valerius Gratus made Procurator of Judea by Tiberius</i>	18
<i>Livy, the illustrious Roman historian, died at Padua</i>	18
<i>Herod Antipas founds the city of Tiberias</i>	18
<i>Strabo, the celebrated Greek historian, born in Cappadocia</i> ...	19
Luke ii..... <i>John the Baptist begins to preach</i>	26
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SYNCHRONICAL TABLES OF THE KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL.

THE most difficult part of sacred chronology is the period from the revolt of the ten tribes to the destruction of Jerusalem. To harmonize the different reigns of the kings of Judah and the kings of Israel has been a perplexing task with chronologists. No man, perhaps, has devoted to this subject more careful and critical study than Dr. Hales in his *ANALYSIS*. He speaks of it as the "Gordian knot" of sacred chronology. He says that the difficulty of harmonizing the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel together has principally arisen: 1. From the discordance of some of the correspondences in the years of their respective reigns, with the direct lengths of these reigns; and 2. From not critically determining the duration of the two interregnums or vacancies in the succession of the latter kings, so as to make them correspond with the former throughout.

Dr. Hales has attempted, as he thinks, successfully, to adjust and harmonize the respective reigns of the two kingdoms. Without stating the *principles* on which his adjustment is based, it will be sufficient to give the results of his critical labors in the following tables:

KINGS OF JUDAH.			KINGS OF ISRAEL.		
	Length of reign. Yrs.	Begin- ning of reign. B. C.		Length of reign. Yrs.	Begin- ning of reign. B. C.
Rehoboam.....	17	990	Jeroboam.....	22	990
Abijah.....	8	978	Nadab.....	2	968
Assa.....	41	970	Baasha.....	23	966
Jehoshaphat.....	25	929	Ela.....	1	943
Jehoram.....	8	904	Omri.....	11	943
Ahaziah.....	1	896	Ahab.....	22	931
Athaliah.....	6	895	Ahaziah.....	2	909
Joash.....	40	889	Jehoram.....	12	907
Amaziah.....	29	849	Jehu.....	28	895
<i>Interregnum</i>	11	890	Jehoahaz.....	17	867
Uzziah.....	52	809	Jehoash.....	16	850
Jotham.....	16	757	Jeroboam II.....	41	834
Ahaz.....	16	741	<i>1st Interregnum</i>	22	792
Hezekiah.....	29	725	Zechariah and Shallum..	1	771
Manasseh.....	55	696	Menahem.....	10	770
Amon.....	2	641	Pekahiah.....	2	760
Josiah.....	31	639	Pekah.....	20	753
Jehoahaz.....	3 mos.		<i>2d Interregnum</i>	10	738
Jehoiakim.....	11	608	Hoshea.....	9	726
Jehoiakin.....	3 mos.		Samaria taken.....		719
Zedekiah.....	11	597			
Jerusalem taken.....		586			

The Babylonish captivity takes place under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

The Ten Tribes carried captive into Assyria by Shalmaneser.

There is some difference between the chronological dates of Dr. Hales and those adopted by some other chronologists. Our common version of the Bible reckons the time of the revolt of the Ten Tribes, and the beginning of the reigns of Rehoboam and Jeroboam, to be 975 years B. C. The dates adopted by Jahn, as found in Prof. Stowe's translation, conform to those of the authorized English version, in which the chronology of Abp. Usher is adopted. Stackhouse's tables do not differ materially from the same. These discrepancies, to be expected from the absence of positive Scripture data, are of very little account, since they do not affect the general results aimed at in chronological calculations.

TABLE

OF MONEY, WEIGHTS, AND MEASURES, MENTIONED IN THE SCRIPTURES.

1.—*Jewish Money, and its Equivalent in American Coin.*

Among the most ancient nations recoined money was first used, the value of the precious metals being estimated by weight, Gen. xxiii., 16. The first reference to coined money in the Bible is found in Ezra ii., 69, and Neh. vii., 70–72, in which passages is noticed a Persian coin of gold, called *dram*. The earliest reference to the coining of money by the Jews is found in the first book of Maccabees, xv., 6, permission having been granted by Antiochus VII., during the pontificate of Simon, 140 years before Christ. See History of the Bible, p. 484. The following denominations of money are specified in the Old Testament, as current in Patriarchal and ancient Jewish times.

	Dolla.	Cts.
A gerah, one-twentieth of a shekel, Exod. xxx., 13	0	2½
A bekah, half shekel, Exod. xxxviii., 26	0	25
A shekel, Levit. xxvii., 8, 25, about.	0	50
A maneh, 60 shekels, Ezek. xlv., 12.	30	00
A talent, 3,000 shekels, silver, Exod. xxxviii., 25	1,519	20

Roman Currency mentioned in the New Testament.

	Dolla.	Cts.
A mite, copper coin, Mark xii., 42.	0	0½
A farthing, brass coin, Matt. x., 29.	0	0½
A penny — denarius, Matt. xxii., 19	0	14
A stater — "piece of money," Matt. xvii., 27	0	60
A pound — mina, one-sixtieth of a talent, Luke xix., 13–20	14	00

2.—*Scripture Measure of Length, reduced to English Measure.*

	Feet	Inches
A digit, finger's breadth, Jer. lii., 21.....	0	0 $\frac{1}{2}$
A palm, hand breadth, Exod. xxv., 25.....	0	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
A span, extension from extremity of thumb and little finger...	0	10 $\frac{1}{2}$
A cubit, from elbow to extremity of middle finger.....	1	9 $\frac{1}{2}$
A fathom, Acts xxvii., 28.....	7	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
Ezekiel's reed, Ezek. xl., 5.....	10	11
Measuring line, Ezek. xl., 8.....	145	11
Furlong, Greek <i>stadium</i> , Luke xxiv., 18.....	606	9
Sabbath day's journey, three-quarters of a mile, Acts i., 13....	3,648	0
Eastern mile, Matt. v., 41, 1618 yards.....	4,854	0

3.—*Scripture Measures of Capacity.*

LIQUID MEASURE.

	Gals.	Pints
A log, Levit. xiv., 12, 15.....	0	0 $\frac{1}{2}$
A cab, 2 Kings vi., 25.....	0	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
An omer, Exod. xvi., 36.....	0	6 $\frac{1}{2}$
A hin, Exod. xxix., 40.....	1	2
An ephah or bath, 1 Kings vii., 26— <i>batus</i> , Luke xvi., 6.....	7	4

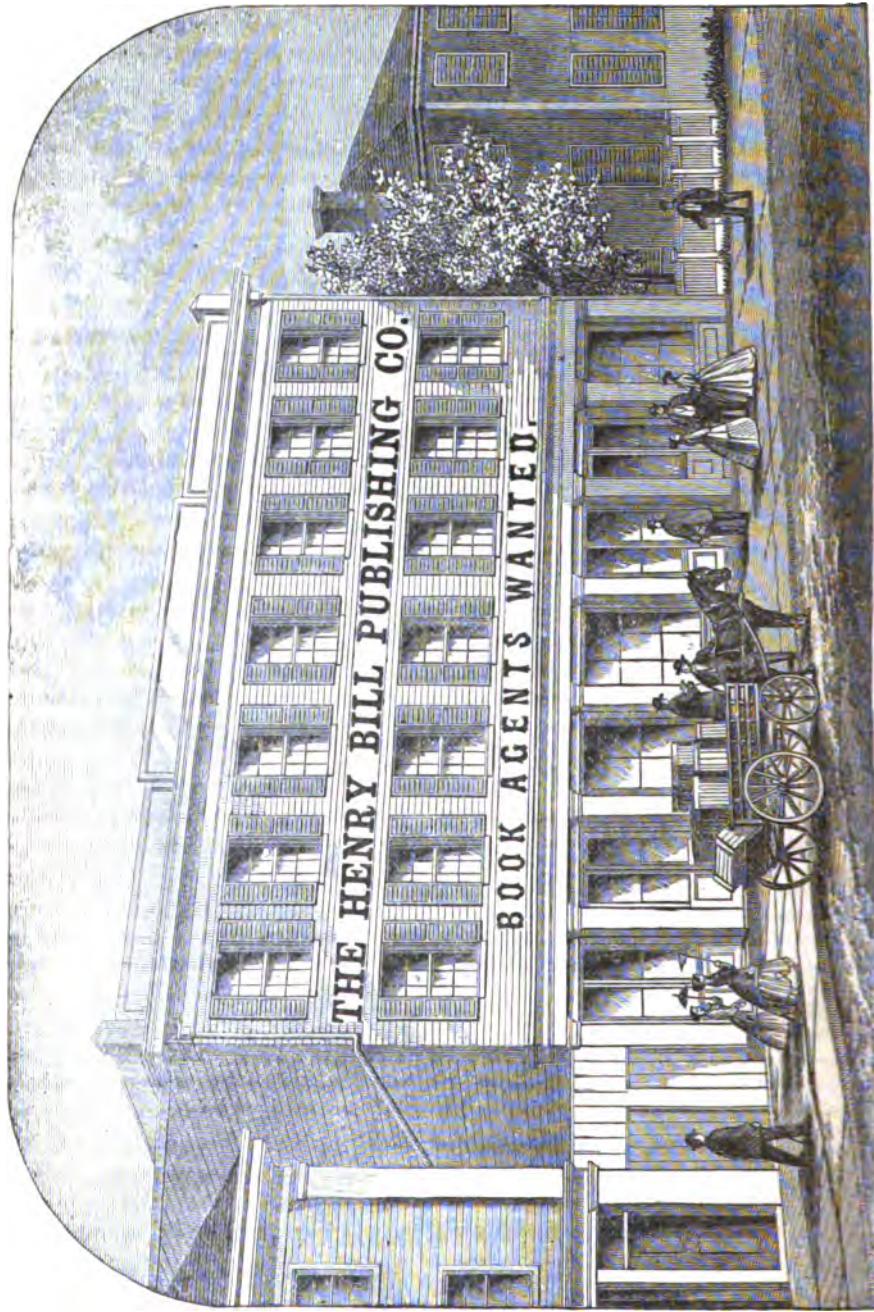
DRY MEASURE.

	Peck.	Gal.	Pint.
A cab, 2 Kings, vi., 25.....	0	0	0 $\frac{1}{2}$
A seah, Greek <i>saton</i> , Matt. xiii., 33; Luke xiii., 21.....	1	0	1
An ephah, Levit. vi., 11.....	3	0	2
A letech, Hosea iii., 2.....	16	0	1
A homer, Numb. xi., 32; Ezek. xlv., 11, 14.....	32	0	2

In collating the several tables of Jewish money, weights and measures, adopted by archaeologists and commentators, discrepancies will be found to exist. This may be expected from the consideration, that exact data are wanting in the Scriptures in respect to this subject.

In addition to these tables, there is the *Scripture table of time*. The Jewish year embraced twelve lunar months, of 30 days each, making the year to consist of 360 days. But by some adjustment in intercalating the additional days, it was made essentially a solar year of 365 days. Subsequently to the exodus from Egypt, the Hebrew year was reckoned as beginning with the time of that event, *i. e.*, the time of the new moon, nearest the vernal equinox, in the month of Abib, corresponding to April. Seasons, weeks, and days, were regarded as divisions of time by the Hebrews. They reckoned their civil day from sunset to sunset, dividing it as follows:—1. "the dawn;" 2. "sunrise;" 3. "heat of the day;" 4. "the noon;" 5. "the cool of the day;" 6. "the evening." When the division of the day into hours was adopted is not known.

Before the captivity, the Jews divided the night into three watches, *viz.*: the beginning of the watch, the middle watch, the morning watch. In the New Testament the Roman method was adopted, and the night watches were four, *viz.*: "even, midnight, cock-crowing, and morning." They continued respectively:—1. from twilight till 9 o'clock; 2. from 9 till 12 o'clock; 3. from 12 till 3 o'clock, morning; 4. from 3 till daybreak. The day was reckoned twelve hours, and the night twelve.



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From Rev. James Burnham,
Pastor Congregational Church, Wilton, Me.

The "Young People's Illustrated Bible History" is a work admirably adapted to interest and instruct the young in the events there recorded. It supplies what has long been wanted, and will, I think, accomplish more in attracting the young to the sacred volume than any, or even all other books now in use. I cheerfully recommend it to parents and Sabbath Schools.

JAMES BURNHAM.

From Rev. W. B. Sprague, D.D.,
Pastor Presbyterian Church, Albany, N. Y.

I have examined with care the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History," lately published by Mr. Henry Bill, of Norwich, and am greatly impressed with its adaptedness to the end it is designed to answer, while it brings out all the leading facts and characters of the Bible in a manner eminently fitted to impress the young. There is a *beautiful simplicity pervading it* that cannot but recommend it to persons of any age and of the most mature culture. The introduction by Dr. Bond contains a concise, luminous, and very satisfactory view of the Divine authority of the Scriptures. The work, as a whole, and in all parts, is worthy of a wide circulation.

W. B. SPRAGUE.

From Rev. John P. Gulliver, D.D.,
President Knox College, Galesburg, Ill.

The "Young People's Bible History" is a *good book*. The selection of topics is *good*. The arrangement of incidents is *good*. The language is *peculiarly good*. The words are short, pithy *Saxon* words, such as are only drawn from the "well of English undefiled." The sentences are brief and simple. In fact, after reading a few articles, I began to comprehend the almost incredible account of its remarkable sale. It is certainly a most favorable sign of our times that such a book can find readers and purchasers by *tens of thousands*.

JOHN P. GULLIVER.

From Rev. M. M. G. Dana,
Pastor Second Congregational Church, Norwich, Conn.

I have looked over your "Young People's Bible History," and am much pleased with it. I most cordially commend it, as calculated to interest young readers more in the Bible. Any attempt to bring Scripture narratives before the minds of youth is deserving of every Christian's approbation. I should judge that this work would inspire, in the hearts of the young, and the old too, a warmer love for the Scriptures. And this effort to popularize its truths, to bring its matchless histories home to childhood's heart, should secure for the volume a wide circulation. Its short chapters and frequent illustrations cannot fail to make the book a favorite in every home.

M. M. G. DANA.

From Rev. Frank Rogers Morse,
Pastor Worthen-St. Bap. Church, Lowell, Mass.

The "YOUNG PEOPLE'S BIBLE HISTORY" is a rare work, comprising a vast amount of useful information for the young Bible student. It is a rich contribution to our sacred literature. The book is beautifully embellished with numerous engravings. The introduction, by Dr. Bond, is most admirable.

FRANK ROGERS MORSE.

From Rev. Geo. B. Gow,
Pastor Main-st. Baptist Church, Worcester, Mass.

I have examined the "Young People's Bible History," and am much pleased with it. It seems to be peculiarly adapted to interest and instruct young people in the history and truth of the Bible. My little boy of nine years reads it with great eagerness, and says, "It is splendid."

GEORGE B. GOW.

From Rev. Horace James,

Pastor 1st Cong. Church, Lowell, Mass.

I find that the "Young People's Bible History," is an attractive work to children, which is the best proof that it is well done. I welcome every thing which promises to increase in the public mind an intelligent regard for the sacred Scriptures, and to inspire new interest in them. THAT THIS BOOK IS DOING THAT, IN A GREAT MULTITUDE OF INSTANCES, IS ITS MOST VALUABLE RECOMMENDATION.

HORACE JAMES.

From Prof. E. Pond, D.D., of Bangor, in
the Christian Mirror.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ILLUSTRATED BIBLE HISTORY: Being a simple and attractive account of the Great Events mentioned in the Old and New Testaments. With an Introduction by the American Editor, Rev. Alvan Bond, D.D., Norwich, Conn. Published by Henry Bill.

This work is not to be confounded with Kitto's History of the Bible, issued from the same house, and edited by the same hand, the last year. That was a learned History of the Bible; this is a condensed arrangement of the principal points of the Bible history; that was written by Kitto himself; this by an anonymous English author. That was intended for mature minds; this is more especially adapted to the case of children and youth. Hence it is appropriately called "Young People's Bible History," and I can hardly conceive of a work better calculated to go into Christian families and interest the younger members. The introduction, like every thing from the pen of Dr. Bond, is neatly and tastefully prepared; the printing, the binding, the engravings are beautiful; and we cordially commend it to Christian householders for the benefit of the younger members of their families.

From Rev. G. B. Willcox,
Pastor 2d Cong. Church, New London.

I have looked over the "Young People's Bible History" with great interest, *EVER DELICATE*. The juvenile authority in such matters in our household says it is "*REMARKABLE*," which please accept as about as high a commendation (though you may not have known it) as is possible in this fallible world.

G. B. WILLCOX.

From Rev. Arthur M. Knapp,
 Pastor 1st Cong. Society, Providence, R. I.

The "Young People's Bible History" seems well adapted to the use of Teachers who may wish to increase the interest of their pupils by presenting the Bible story in a new form.

ARTHUR M. KNAPP.

From Rev. J. A. Gallup,
 Pastor Cong. Church, Madison, Conn.

The "Young People's Bible History" I think gives promise of being an interesting and instructive work, and one calculated to make the young more familiar with the leading facts of the Bible, which is our great repository of sacred knowledge.

J. A. GALLUP.

From Rev. H. K. Pervear,
 Pastor 1st Baptist Church, Worcester, Mass.

The "Young People's Bible History" appears to be a very useful book for all; particularly interesting to children.

H. K. PERVEAR.

WM. PENTICOST, Pastor Laurel-street Methodist Church.
 T. E. Sr. JOHN, Pastor Universalist Church.

From Rev. C. M. Lamson,
 Pastor 2d Cong. Church, North Bridgewater, Mass.

From an examination, I should infer that the reading of the "Young People's Bible History" would meet the aims of the author, and increase our interest and profit from the Scripture narratives.

C. M. LAMSON.

From Rev. T. H. Quigley,
 Pastor of Congregational Church, Wellsville, Alleghany Co., N. Y.

I have carefully examined the Prospectus of the forthcoming work entitled "Young People's Illustrated Bible History" and cheerfully commend it for its simplicity of style, its correctness in narrating the events of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, and especially for its adaptation to our children and youth. I could wish it might find a place in every household in the land.

T. H. QUIGLEY.

From Rev. Wm. R. French,
 Pastor Universalist Church, Turner, Me.

This certifies that I have seen the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History," and judge it an INTERESTING and USEFUL volume, suitable to be in ALL families.

WM. R. FRENCH.

From Rev. E. M. Bartlett,
 Pastor Baptist Church, East Livermore, Me.

This may certify, that, having carefully examined the "Young People's Illustrated History," I can heartily recommend it to all lovers of sacred truth, and especially to children and youth, as a guide and helper in the study of the holy book.

E. M. BARTLETT.

From Rev. Jabez S. Swan,
 Pastor Baptist Church, New London, Conn.

I have carefully examined the work recently published by Henry Bill, Esq., of Norwich, Ct., entitled, "Young People's Bible History," and can cheerfully testify to its intrinsic value as a stimulus to a more thorough study of the word of God. Any volume that enhances the interest of immortal minds in the word of God is deserving of a diligent perusal. This work will be appreciated by that large class of Sabbath School teachers who are not able to purchase the expensive Commentary and Encyclopedia, but who desire to be thoroughly fitted to enforce the facts of the Bible in the minds of those persons entrusted to their charge. It will serve to familiarize their minds with the truth, and furnish them with fresher views of its substance. In these days of degenerate literature, such a work is eminently needed, and has no small mission to fulfil. It is with pleasure that I commend it to the Christian reader as a fit companion of the quiet hours of the Sabbath, and will lead to the formation of noble purposes of living. Clear in its style, evangelical in its essence, spiritual in its tendency, it will make the soul more thoughtful of God and its relations to him.

JABEZ S. SWAN.

From Rev. Joseph Smith,
 Pastor First Congregational Church, Burton, Me.

Dear Sir,—I have examined your work, the "Young People's Bible History," and am very much pleased with it. The design of the work, and the manner in which it is executed, are admirable. The narrations are given with such clearness and vivacity as to secure the attention of all, especially the young, who might not be particularly interested in the continuous reading of the Bible. The chronological tables of the important events of ancient times, and the introduction, giving a condensed view of the proofs of the divine origin of the Scriptures, very much enhance the value of the work. I have never met with a work so well suited to interest and benefit the young as this; and its introduction into a family of children would confer on them a blessing of vital importance.

JOSEPH SMITH.

From Rev. W. R. Cross,
 Pastor First Congregational Church, New Gloucester, Me.

I have examined with care the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History," and think it a MUCH NEEDED and VALUABLE WORK. I am glad the young people in our community are now favored with an opportunity to secure it. To them and to their parents and teachers, both the work and the opportunity are cordially commended.

W. R. CROSS.

From Col. G. G. Phelps and Wife.

The work entitled "Young People's Illustrated Bible History" was left by a friend in my family several months ago; and I take pleasure in saying that, after a thorough examination, I consider it a work of greater value to the people, whether young or old, than all the works on the Bible I have ever seen, and one that none of us ought to do without.

G. G. PHELPS.
 S. S. Supt., So. Park, Me.
 Mrs. G. G. PHELPS.

From Rev. D. C. Babcock,

Pastor Chesnut-St. M. E. Church, Nashua, N. H.

The agent for the "Young People's Bible History" is, in my opinion, conferring a *real* favor on this community by calling attention to so excellent a book.

I have examined it with care, and commend it unhesitatingly. The three hundred and sixty topics presented are each full of interest, and are treated in a style so simple and beautiful as to engage the dullest mind. Mothers, secure it; read it to your little ones, and let the older ones read it for themselves. It will not fail to interest them, and will, we trust, make them "wise unto salvation."
D. C. BABCOCK.

From Rev. Henry M. Holmes,

Pastor Congregational Church, Benson, Vt.

The "Young People's Illustrated Bible History" seems to us to meet a public want. Aside from *children*, there is a large class who crave simple narrative. Sabbath-school teachers also will find this a ready aid. Three hundred and seventy-four biblical subjects are here treated with great care and conciseness. The author appears not to be afraid to use simple language, and, while talking *small*, does not use "small talk." The frequent use of plain Scripture in hints and explanations of the subject impresses the lessons upon us. The applications of stories are apt and brief, the author leaving off when he is done. We consider the engravings, in the main, to be of rare merit,—suggestive, and worthy of study. We like the book.

HENRY M. HOLMES.

From Rev. J. Thomson,

Rector Christ Church, Andover, Mass.

I have examined with care the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History." This book contains a sketch of almost every biographical incident in the Bible, large portions of the matter being in the very words of Holy Scripture. The compiler has exerted a marvellous industry in throwing into each narrative every point of interest from the original. One special excellence is the brevity of those little tales; moreover, the paper, type, and steel engravings, are much superior to the average quality generally found in such books.

JAMES THOMSON.

From Rev. Charles Smith,

Pastor South Congregational Church, Andover, Mass.

I have examined the book entitled "Young People's Bible History," and find it to be well adapted to interest and instruct the young, both from its style and matter.

CHARLES SMITH.

From Rev. James P. Lane,

Pastor Free Congregational Church, Andover, Mass.

From an examination of the "Young People's Bible History," edited by Dr. Bond, I am satisfied that it is a work of great merit, especially adapted to interest the young. The style is simple and plain, yet graphic and impressive; the illustrations are numerous, and many of them are very fine engravings; the printing, and the general make-up of the book, are all that could be desired. I know of no other book better adapted for its purpose than this.

JAMES P. LANE.

From Rev. Mortimer Blake, D.D.,

Pastor of Winslow Church (Congregational), Taunton, Mass.

A protracted and careful examination of the "Young People's Bible History" induces me to recommend it very highly as a faithful digest of the Bible narratives. Avoiding doubtful speculations, and giving the sense in good Anglo-Saxon language, such as children and youth most delight in, while it abounds in practical suggestions which will do the oldest readers good. It is pervaded with a sweet reverence for the Word of God, and will make one of the best presents you can find for your family library. I cordially recommend it.
MORTIMER BLAKE.

From Rev. Jacob Ide, Jun.,

Pastor Congregational Church, Mansfield, Mass.

I regard the "Young People's Bible History" as a whole Sabbath-school library, containing those *true* stories which are sure to interest and benefit the young.

JACOB IDE, JUN.

From Rev. H. P. Torsey,

President Kent's Hill Seminary and College, Readfield, Me.

"Young People's Illustrated Bible History" has an *unusual claim* upon public patronage. Every *Christian* should aid its circulation.

H. P. TORSEY.

From Rev. Frederick D. Avery,

Pastor Congregational Church, Columbia, Conn.

The "Young People's Bible History," consisting of Bible stories in consecutive order, seems to be well adapted to interest and instruct the young, and is happily arranged, so that, by reading a sketch a day, one can complete the book in a year; while, all through, the eye will be delighted with the impressive illustrations.

FREDERICK D. AVERY.

From Rev. C. S. Buswell,

Pastor Methodist Church, Proctorsville, Vt.

I think the "Young People's Bible History" calculated to aid and interest in the study of the Holy Scriptures in a very high degree, both from its *illustrations* and *topical arrangements*.

C. S. BUSWELL.

From Rev. S. F. Brown,

Pastor Baptist Church, Cavendish, Vt.

I can cheerfully recommend the "Young People's Bible History" for general circulation. I regard it as having several *important advantages* for all interested in Bible history.

S. F. BROWN.

From Rev. Joseph Barber,

Pastor Universalist Church, Fairville, Vt.

This is to certify that from an examination of the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History," I have no hesitation in recommending it as a work *highly* instructive and *useful*—a work which I doubt not should be in every family. I think it will be found to interest *all*, and to open up to their minds a new field of thought, and lead them to a love of the Bible which they might never attain to without it. And my desire is, that it may be introduced into our families and Sabbath schools.

JOSEPH BARBER.

From Rev. J. R. Haskins,
Pastor Baptist Church, Bellows Falls.

Having examined the work entitled "Young People's Bible History," I think it cannot be too highly recommended as peculiarly adapted to interest and instruct that class for whom it is more especially designed, and doubtless would be interesting and profitable for all ages, and serve to awaken a greater interest in the study of the Bible itself.

J. R. HASKINS.

From Rev. E. S. Fish,

Pastor First Baptist Church, Livermore, Ma.

This certifies that I have examined the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History," and I judge it to be an *excellent* book for introduction into every family.

E. S. FISH.

From Rev. S. L. Blake,

Pastor South Congregational Church, Concord, N. H.

The "Young People's Bible History" cannot fail to interest them in the study of God's word. It is capably arranged in chronological order, and is easy for reference. It would be an invaluable aid for Sabbath-school scholars in studying Bible History, and do very much to promote a knowledge of which there is a sad deficiency. I cordially recommend it.

S. L. BLAKE.

In agreement with the above,

F. D. AYER,
Pastor First Cong. Church.

From Rev. Daniel W. Faunce,

Pastor First Baptist Church, Concord, N. H.

The "Young People's Bible History" is just the book I have wanted to use in my family. Mothers, get it. The older children will read it; the younger listen to it. I have tried it among my own children. The boys say, "It's a splendid book; we like it ever so much." I wish every family where they have children might have a copy.

DANIEL W. FAUNCE.

From Rev. Welcome Lewis,

Pastor Baptist Church, Mansfield, Mass.

The "Young People's Bible History" comprises a series of Scripture characters, sayings, and events. The underlying truth is developed in simple and colloquial style, especially commending them to children and youth, and rendering them none the less readable for the masses. The spirit of the work, prominent practical reflections of nearly every article, is worthy of being imbibed and imitated by all teachers of the young.

WELCÔME LEWIS.

From Rev. E. McCheaney,

Pastor Central Methodist Church, Norwich, Conn.

A good way to save young people from the effects of bad books is by giving them plenty of good ones. The "Young People's Bible History" ranks among the best. The main facts of Scripture history are presented in clear connection; it will tend to increase interest in Bible study. The beautiful frontispiece is highly suggestive. The book is a beautiful gift for the holidays or any other season.

E. MCCHEANEY.

From J. L. Orcutt,

Sabbath-school Superintendent, N. Monmouth, Ma.

I have examined the "Young People's Bible History," and find, that, in matter and style, it appears well adapted to instruct the young in the great historical facts and personages of the Bible. It is simple and graphic, and will prove a great benefit in the family, and the Sabbath-school.

J. L. ORCUTT.

From Rev. J. O. Thompson,

Pastor Methodist Church, Monmouth, Ma.

I have examined with care the "Young People's Bible History," and am pleased with its general design, and with the manner of its execution. There is great need that an interest should be awakened in the minds of our young people; and I think this book will aid in this work. I would cordially commend it to all who have children; and, indeed, many older people might read it with interest and profit.

J. O. THOMPSON.

From G. W. King,

Superintendent Universalist Sabbath-school, North Monmouth, Ma.

I take pleasure in recommending any work that will tend to interest and benefit the young. I consider the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History" a very excellent work for this purpose, and well calculated to instruct and benefit all who peruse it.

G. W. KING.

From Rev. L. H. Bean,

Pastor Methodist-Episcopal Church, Damariscotta, Me.

The "Young People's Illustrated Bible History" is a work, in my opinion, that commends itself to every candid mind. Both *old* and *young* may study its pages, and receive *great good* by so doing. Let it be read prayerfully; for it is one of the lights that point to the home of the faithful.

L. H. BEAN.

From Rev. N. C. Mallory,

Manchester, N. H.

I have specially examined the work entitled "Young People's Bible History," and on this account am prepared to say that it is in every way, without exception, a family treasure. And, further, that it seems quite providential that such a work should have been conceived at this time, when the youth of our community are eagerly consuming worthless, and more than worthless literature.

N. C. MALLORY.

From Rev. Thomas Borden,

Pastor Lovell-Street Universalist Church, Manchester, N. H.

The "YOUNG PEOPLE'S BIBLE HISTORY."—Truly it is a work of great merit. The deeply interesting events recorded in the Bible are so simplified, that they can be comprehended by even a child. We cheerfully recommend it.

THOMAS BORDEN.

From Rev. G. A. Steadman,

Pastor First Baptist Church, Nobleboro', Ma.

I have examined with much interest the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History," and am free to say that I think it a work well adapted to *instruct, interest, and benefit both old and young.*

G. A. STEADMAN.

From Rev. A. Sherwin,
Pastor Merrimack-Street Baptist Church, Man-
chester, N. H.

Having given the volume entitled "Young People's Bible History" a careful examination, I can recommend it as *eminently* fitted to instruct those for whom it has been especially prepared. Such a work must, I think, tend to interest the minds of the young, and greatly promote their reading of the Sacred Scriptures. An aid of this kind should be highly prized by those who would train up their children in the knowledge of our holy religion.

A. SHERWIN.

From Rev. N. L. Rowell,
Pastor Pine-Street Methodist Episcopal Church,
Manchester, N. H.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.—Having carefully examined the "Young People's Bible History," I am prepared to heartily recommend it to the reading public. The introduction by the American editor (Rev. Alvan Bond, D.D.) is of itself a compendium of knowledge touching the subject treated. The author treats of three hundred and sixty-three subjects of scriptural interest in a style at once simple, clear, concise, and attractive, meeting a long-felt need in every family. I look upon its introduction with special pleasure.

N. L. ROWELL.

From Rev. D. C. Babcock,
Pastor Methodist-Episcopal Church, Manchester,
N. H.

I most heartily concur with the opinions of Rev. Mr. Rowell about this work, as given above.

D. C. BABCOCK.

From Rev. J. Burnham Davis,
Pastor Freewill Baptist Church, Great Falls,
N. H.

I feel warranted in expressing my most hearty approbation of the work ("Young People's Bible History"), and I wish it might find a place in every household. It cannot fail to create among children, as well as adults, a greater love for the study of the Bible.

J. BURNHAM DAVIS.

From Rev. A. C. Herrick,
Principal Hebron Academy, Hebron, Me.

It gives me much pleasure to recommend the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History." It is written in a style to interest and instruct. The illustrations are beautiful and natural. I have seen many of the plates, and can testify to their accuracy as exhibited in this work.

A. C. HERRICK.

From Rev. A. F. Buel,
Pastor Huntington-Street Baptist Church, New
London, Conn.

The "Young People's Bible History" is, in my estimation, all it purports to be. In language simple and plain, embracing all the great leading facts of Scripture,—geographical, historical, and biographical,—it must find a general and hearty welcome among the people, and in turn do them good abundantly.

The index-tables and periodic divisions at the end of the work, of events, characters, families, cities, &c., will be found pre-eminently valuable to any student of the Bible. I give the work, as a book of reference, an abiding-place on my desk in the study.

A. P. BUEL.

From Rev. Thomas P. Field, D.D.,
Pastor First Cong. Church, New London, Conn.

I have read some of the articles in the "Young People's Bible History," and it appears to me admirably suited to instruct young persons in the historical portions of the Scriptures, and to apply the moral teachings to the heart and life of the reader.

THOS. P. FIELD.

From Rev. J. G. Davis,
Amherst, N. H.

The design of the "Young People's Bible History" is excellent; and the general features of its execution impress me favorably. The chapters are short, the topics well chosen, and the language pure and intelligible. These pen-pictures from the sacred volume must be attractive to the young; while they inculcate the soundest lessons of religion and morality. Books of this character, by their wholesome tone, will do much to correct the morbid tastes which are fostered by the sensational stories of our popular religious literature. The mechanical execution of the volume, engravings, paper, and type, are admirable.

Yours sincerely,

J. G. DAVIS.

From Rev. T. S. Norton,
Pastor Congregationalist Church, Northbridge
Centre, Mass.

I have examined the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History," by Dr. Bond, and think it just the book, next to the Bible, to be in every family. I like it, because it is simple, plain, attractive, and practical, and calculated to interest the *old* as well as the *young*, and to take the place of much of the reading of the present day, which not only does not profit, but does immense harm.

T. S. NORTON.

From Rev. F. H. Roberts,
Pastor Methodist-Episcopal Church, Pittsfield,
Vt.

Having examined the "Young People's Bible History," I think it a valuable work, and worthy of a place in every family library. I shall subscribe for the work, and cheerfully recommend it to others.

F. H. ROBERTS.

From Rev. G. G. Austin,
Pastor Methodist Church, Clarendon, Vt.

This is to certify, from the examination of the "Young People's Bible History, Illustrated," I think the work to be a valuable one for the class for whom it is prepared. I would recommend the same, believing its perusal to be both profitable and interesting, and will, undoubtedly, create a greater love for the sacred Scriptures among the youth of our land.

G. G. AUSTIN.

From Rev. T. M. Brown,
Pastor Unitarian Church, Dover, N. H.

From the examination I have been able to give Dr. Bond's "Young People's Bible History," I think well of it, and recommend it to those in whose behalf it was especially prepared. The style is simple, its narrative portions interesting, and its illustrations unusually good.

Intended as it is to adapt biblical instruction to the capacities and needs of the young, it seems to me to deserve a circulation corresponding to the merits of the purpose for which it has been issued.

T. M. BROWN.

From Rev. W. T. Herrick,
Pastor Congregational Church, Clarendon, Vt.

Having examined the "Young People's Bible History," I freely and cheerfully commend it as a work adapted to interest and instruct those young persons for whom it is designed, and to increase their love for the study of the Bible.

W. T. HERRICK.

From H. P. Torsey, LL.D.,
President Kent's Hill College, Radfield, Me.
The "Young People's Bible History" has an unusual claim upon public patronage. Every Christian should aid its circulation.

H. P. TORSEY, LL.D.

From Rev. James J. Bell,
Pastor Congregational Church, Phippsburg, Me.
I have examined the "Young People's Bible History." It is an excellent work for the young, and I earnestly hope that it may be found in every family in the town of Phippsburg.

JAMES J. BELL.

From Rev. Angelle Carroll,
Pastor Main-St. Methodist-Episcopal Church,
Nashua, N. H.

The important design of this work is executed with religious fidelity. The biblical outlines are presented in an interesting and vigorous form, without sacrificing minuteness to conciseness. The applications of the lessons of sacred history are not only numerous and varied, but given with point and effect. It will always be a pleasure to me to find this book in the houses of my congregation.

ANGELLO CARROLL.

From Rev. Frederick Alvord,
Pastor First Cong. Church, Nashua, N. H.
I most heartily commend to all the "Young People's Bible History," and especially to parents, as adapted to interest children in the study of the Bible beyond any book within my acquaintance. Its topical arrangement and simplicity of style are prominent and valuable features.

FREDERICK ALVORD.

From Rev. L. Kinney,
Pastor Baptist Church, Ira, Vt.
After an examination of the "Young People's Bible History," I can cheerfully recommend it as an excellent work. I think it will help to give a better understanding of that best of all books, the Bible. I wish it might have a place in every family in the land.

L. KINNEY.

From Rev. J. Fletcher, D.D.,
Pastor Baptist Church, Wallingford, Vt.
The "Young People's Illustrated Bible History" is not only well adapted to interest and instruct the young in divine knowledge, but it is well worth the perusal and careful study of persons in mature years.

J. FLETCHER, D.D.

From Rev. Edmund Dowse,
Sherborn, Mass.
I am happy to certify that the "Young People's Bible History" is, in my opinion, both an interesting and valuable work, especially for the young.

EDMUND DOWSE.

From Prof. Richard Stanley,
Bates College, Lewiston, Me.

I have examined with care the "Young People's Bible History," and find it is a work to be recommended to all lovers of the Bible, as adapted to give a livelier interest to the study of the best of books. It is well known that the order of time, and the connection of events, is not always preserved and clearly shown in the several historic writings; and it is somewhat difficult for young persons, at least, to gain a connected knowledge of Bible facts and Bible characters. This work is designed to furnish help in these respects, showing the proper succession of events and persons, giving each picture an individuality and distinctness, and drawing from almost every one some lesson of practical wisdom or religious truth. I think young people cannot fail to be interested and benefited by the study of this work in connection with the Bible, from which it is so largely drawn. I need not say to any who know him, that the very name of the editor (Rev. Dr. Bond) is in itself an almost sufficient guaranty of the worth of the book.

RICHARD C. STANLEY.

From Prof. J. Y. Stanton,
Bates College, Me.

Dear Sir.—From an examination of the "Young People's Bible History, Illustrated," I am pleased with it. It cannot fail of being to the young very entertaining and instructive. It will make the truths of the Bible seem more real to them. Besides it is a book that will interest all the readers in a family, from the youngest to the oldest. I can heartily recommend the work.

Yours truly,

J. Y. STANTON.

From Rev. S. Graves, D.D.,
Pastor Baptist Church, Grand Rapids, Mich.
I have examined with interest and satisfaction the "Young People's Bible History," just issued by the enterprising Publishing House of Hon. H. Bill, and take pleasure in commending it, as happily adapted to the instruction of the young people in the word of God.

S. GRAVES.

From Rev. Jacob Ide, D.D.,
West Medford, Mass.
The "Young People's Bible History," by the Rev. Dr. Bond, is, in my estimation, a very valuable as well as interesting work; and I do most sincerely wish it an extensive circulation, especially among the young people in this place.

JACOB IDE, D.D.

From Rev. Jacob Roberts,
Pastor Cong. Church, East Medway, Mass.
I agree with the above recommendation.

JACOB ROBERTS.

From Rev. N. M. Learned,
Pastor Methodist-Episcopal Church, Middletown, Vt.
This may certify that I have hastily examined the work entitled "Young People's Bible History," and judge it to be a desirable work for Bible students. I cheerfully recommend it to the attention of the public,—young people and Sabbath-schools especially.

N. M. LEARNED.

From Miles Grant,
Boston, Mass.

I have examined the "Young People's Bible History," and am *much pleased* with it. It fills a vacuum in biblical literature that has long been felt. It is the *best work* of the kind I have ever seen; and I most cheerfully commend it to all *parents and young people*.

MILES GRANT.

From Rev. Robert Allyn,
President McKendree College, Lebanon, Ill.

MR. BILL,—Allow me to express to you my sincere congratulations on the publication of the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History." I have examined it very carefully, and am certain that it is an instructive and useful book. And it surely will be a valuable aid to the youth of our land, in gaining a thorough knowledge of the great truths and important facts of the sacred history of our race. Its brief paragraphs and familiar style will make it convenient for a vacant half-hour; and the often-repeated moral admonitions render it very promising of good. I trust it may meet with a large sale, and accomplish valuable results.

Yours, very truly,

ROBERT ALLYN.

From Hon. Henry P. Haven,
Ex-Mayor of New London, Conn.

While no other words can equal in force and beauty the inspired text, yet I can readily see that the "Young People's Bible History" presents the interesting incidents of the sacred narrative in an attractive form to the young.

Very truly yours,

HENRY P. HAVEN.

From Rev. William L. Gaylord,
Pastor Pearl-Street Cong. Church, Nashua, N. H.

I have read with care several chapters of the "Young People's Bible History," and it appears to me to be an exceedingly valuable work. It aims to give the substance of sacred history in simple and attractive lessons adapted to the peculiar wants of youthful minds; and this result is most happily accomplished. I think the volume will prove one of great value to parents and Sabbath-school teachers in their efforts to instruct the young in biblical knowledge.

WILLIAM L. GAYLORD.

From Rev. E. M. Haynes,
Pastor First Baptist Church, Lewiston, Me.

The "Illustrated Bible" for Young People is a work of great merit. Having examined the work, I can most heartily recommend it to subscribers. As it purports to be, it is adapted to the understanding of children, and cannot fail to interest and instruct them, or even an older class of readers.

The Creation, the Flood, the Bondage and Deliverance of Israel, the remarkable men and women and children mentioned in Holy Writ, including nearly all of the great events of sacred history, together with the teachings of Christ and his apostles,—all subjects of great importance to young and old,—are treated in a style that is at once simple and attractive. But the chief attractions and value of the book are the appropriate moral reflections of the authors, and the *admirable illustrations*, many of which are new.

E. M. HAYNES.

From Rev. L. H. Cobb,
Pastor Congregational Church, Springfield, Vt.

I have examined the "Young People's Bible History," published by Hon. Henry Bill of Norwich, Conn. I am charmed with the beautiful, easy flow of thought, and thoroughly evangelical spirit, with which the grand outline of Bible history is here drawn. It will be of great value to every parent and Sabbath-school teacher who wishes to help the young understand and love the Bible. I most heartily commend it.

L. H. COBB.

From Rev. J. C. W. Coxé,
Pastor Methodist-Episcopal Church, Springfield, Vt.

I have examined the "Young People's Bible History," and feel prepared to cordially commend it as a work of substantial merit. Its accuracy in matters of fact, its beauty of style in narration, the elegance of its illustrations, together with the valuable compendium of tables, render it a work suitable and attractive alike for young and old. For Sabbath-school teachers it will prove a choice handbook; and parents will find it a valuable addition to the family library.

J. C. W. COXE.

From Rev. A. B. Dascomb,
Pastor Congregational Church, Woodstock, Vt.

I have examined the "Young People's Bible History," and it seems to me a work calculated to interest and instruct the young, and also many who are old, in Bible scenes and events and truths, and to be worthy a place on the table of those who have regard for the Holy Scriptures.

A. B. DASCOMB.

From Rev. J. O. Drumm,
Pastor St. James Church, Woodstock, Vt.

I have examined the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History;" and my opinion is, that it is one of the *best books of the day*. What we need for children and youth is something to simplify the Holy Bible, and make it more attractive. This is found in the book spoken of above. Let all who possibly can purchase it.

J. O. DRUMM.

From Rev. Moses Kidder,
Pastor Christian Church, Woodstock, Vt.

I regard the "Young People's Bible History" as a book of much value, both for its religious influence upon the mind, and the amount of useful information it contains. The Sunday-school teacher, and all others interested in Bible history and knowledge, I think will find in it a help.

MOSES KIDDER.

From Rev. N. W. Wilder,
Pastor Methodist-Episcopal Church, Woodstock, Vt.

After having examined the book entitled the "Young People's Bible History," I can recommend it as a book calculated to be of great service in making the leading historical events of the Bible familiar to the young. Too much attention of the right kind cannot be given in the direction of making the moral and religious teachings of the best of all books impressive. This work I think well adapted to interest deeply all classes, young and old.

N. W. WILDER.

From Rev. L. W. Brigham,
Pastor Liberal-Christian Church, Rutland, Vt.

I consider the "Young People's Bible History" a valuable work for the young, and all interested in the study of the Bible. I would cheerfully recommend it to the attention of all such.

L. W. BRIGHAM.

From Rev. Miles Grant,
Second-Advent Preacher, Boston, Mass.

I have examined the "Young People's Bible History," and am much pleased with it. It fills a vacuum in biblical literature that has been long felt. It is the best thing of the kind I have ever seen; and I most cheerfully commend it to all parents and the young.

MILES GRANT.

From Rev. James Gibson Johnson,
Pastor Congregational Church, Rutland, Vt.

Any book is of great value that will bring forcibly before the minds of the young the facts of the Bible. I am glad to recommend this "Young People's Bible History" as a very good book of this kind. I hope the circulation, already wide, may be greatly extended.

JAMES G. JOHNSON.

From Rev. B. M. Hall,
Pastor Methodist-Episcopal Church, Rutland, Vt.

The "Young People's Bible History" must, in my opinion, be valuable to the class for which it is designed. I cheerfully recommend it to the families in every community.

B. M. HALL.

From Rev. J. C. Carpenter,
Pastor Baptist Church, Pittsford, Vt.

THE "YOUNG PEOPLE'S ILLUSTRATED BIBLE HISTORY."—Having examined the above-named work, I can heartily recommend it, especially to the class of persons for which it is intended.

J. C. CARPENTER.

From Rev. E. N. Fernald,
Pastor Free Baptist Church, Auburn, Me.

I have examined the "Young People's Bible History," and am *delighted* with it. It is a book to be read with interest, and remembered with ease. Its aim is a noble one, and it hits its mark. Its style is simple, clear, and vigorous; and its illustrations are *excellent*. I have bought it, and advise *all my friends* to do the same. Its perusal cannot fail to awaken in any mind a new interest in the inspired narratives of the Bible.

E. N. FERNALD.

From Rev. W. T. Sleeper,
Sherman, Me.

I consider the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History" one of the *best* and most *interesting* works published in this country. I have examined it quite thoroughly, and have read many of its chapters, and can say it is just *the book* to make the young people interested in the Scriptures. It would help both *old* and *young* to read the word understandingly. I like this book because the children *will read it*. You are doing much good while you spread the seed by selling this book throughout the country.

W. T. SLEEPER.

From Rev. G. H. Townsend,
Pastor Methodist Church, Pittsford, Vt.

The "Young People's Illustrated Bible History" is, undoubtedly, a very good work; and I should be happy to see it in every family in my congregation, and especially in the hands of our young people.

G. H. TOWNSEND.

From Rev. George Harris, Junr.,
Pastor Congregational Church, Auburn, Me.

I recommend the "Young People's Bible History," because, and *only* because, I like it. It is not a "milk-and-water" production, but has the *CREAM* of the Bible. It is reliable, clear, interesting. The engravings have *real* artistic merit. *I would gladly see the book in every house.*

GEORGE HARRIS, JUNR.

From Hon. Sidney Perham,
Governor of Maine.

I have examined with care the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History," published by Henry Bill. It presents in a simple and comprehensive style the leading events recorded in the Old and New Testaments, with the lives of the Patriarchs, Christ, and the Apostles, and many other persons prominently referred to in Bible history.

The work is intended especially for young people, as its title indicates; but it cannot fail to be *interesting* and *profitable* to persons of *mature years*. I take pleasure in recommending this work to *all* the people whether *young* or *old*.

SIDNEY PERHAM.

From Rev. G. P. Mathews,
Pastor Baptist Church, Auburn, Me.

Having carefully examined, by *reading*, the "Young People's Bible History," with an introduction by Rev. Dr. Bond, I am prepared to give it my hearty recommendation as one of the best books of the day.

While it cannot fail to interest and instruct and *bless* the young who carefully read it, it cannot be read by persons of *any age*, and of the highest culture, without strengthening their confidence and increasing their interest in that Holy Word of God, which reveals salvation and the heavenly home.

G. P. MATHEWS.

From Rev. S. W. McCollister,
Pastor Universalist Church, Nashua, N. H.

We have the "Young People's Bible History" in our family, and our children enjoy reading it very much. With great pleasure we can recommend it as a work well calculated to meet the wants of the young.

S. W. MCCOLLISTER.

From Rev. A. F. Vance, Jr.,
Pastor Universalist Church, Auburn, Me.

Having taken but a hasty survey of the contents and engravings of the "Young People's Bible History," I *yet take great pleasure* in recommending it to *young* and *old* as a simple and useful paraphrase of the Holy Book, which should be known and loved by all.

A. F. VANCE, JR.

From Hon. Lemuel Allan Wilmot,
Governor of the Province of New Brunswick,
Government House, Fredericton.

I have read several chapters in the "Young People's Bible History," both from the Old and New Testament; and the more I have read the better I like it. This *valuable* book should form a part of the library for young people in *every household*. The editor has shown great judgment and good taste in his choice of words, and the occasional interrogatives are effective and well put.

Its highest recommendation is, that it is all Bible truth, and therefore must prove instructive and useful. Before children have learned to read, parents will find that they will listen with attention and deep interest to the reading of the narratives, and will not fail to understand and retain large portions.

Such beautiful word-pictures require no artistic illustrations. I shall be *delighted* to hear that you have sold *many thousand copies* in the Province.

L. A. WILMOT.

From Rev. Edwards A. Park, D.D.,
Professor Andover Theological Seminary, Andover, Mass.

Rev. Dr. Bond, the editor of the "Young People's Bible History," was formerly Professor of Sacred Literature in the Theological Seminary at Bangor, Me. He has also been an active and faithful pastor of important churches in Massachusetts and Connecticut. He is thus well qualified for superintending the publication of a work like the present. He has edited the work with care and skill. His introduction contains many valuable thoughts. The title of the book shows the design of it. The young persons, for whom the History was prepared, will be interested in it, and will learn to read the Bible with quickened attention. The value of the book has been proved by experience. *May it have a large circulation!*

EDWARDS A. PARK.

From Rev. Austin Phelps, D.D.,
Professor Andover Theological Seminary, Andover, Mass.

I have examined the "Young People's Bible History," edited by the Rev. Dr. Bond, and find it to be a very complete and judiciously arranged compendium of the Biblical narrative. It cannot fail to be a valuable addition to family libraries. The Introduction, Appendix, and Chronological Table, add much to its worth. It is an excellent aid to parents in regulating the Sabbath-reading of children.

AUSTIN PHELPS.

From Rev. N. McKay,
Pastor St. David's Church, St. John, N.B.
Second Commendation.

Some time ago I felt warranted, from a cursory examination, to express a favorable opinion of the "Young People's Bible History."

I have now had ample opportunity of thoroughly examining the work, having read it through, and many parts of it often, to my own little ones; and I am happy to say, that I think *more and more of the work every day*. Little ones will not only listen with interest to these chapters, but will lay aside their favorite plays, and plead to have the book read to them; and to older folks the book contains valuable lessons and interesting delineations of the touching stories of the Holy Book. *I feel that I cannot too highly recommend it; and I am glad always to meet it on the tables of the families whom I am in the habit of professionally visiting.*

N. MCKAY.

From Rev. James J. Hill,
Rector of Trinity Church, St. John, N.B.

I have carefully looked over the "Young People's Bible History," and consider it a work *admirably* suited to win the attention of children, and even of their elders. It is the *best thing* of the kind that I have met with, and I can confidently recommend it for its intrinsic worth and the pure Saxon dress in which it is clothed.

JAMES J. HILL.

From Rev. G. M. W. Carey,
Pastor German Street Baptist Church, St. John, N.B.

I have had the "Young People's Bible History" in my family for two months; and, after repeated examinations, I am *more and more* deeply convinced that it is a work of *rare excellence*, and *great value*, supplying a felt and acknowledged want in fireside, Sabbath-school, and Bible-class instruction. *The book grows upon me as I read it*; and I am confident that every one who peruses it attentively will be both pleased and profited in an increasing degree.

G. M. W. CAREY.

From Gordon Hall, D.D.,

Pastor Cong. Church, Northampton, Mass.

I have examined with some carefulness the "Young People's Bible History." It is an excellent compendium of Scripture narrative. The subjects of the chapters are interesting, the style is simple, easy, and lively, the spirit and sentiment of the work evangelical, and there is much valuable information given by the maps and tables. It is a valuable book for young people, and for old people likewise, good to have in any family, and likely to promote the reading and knowledge of the Holy Bible.

GORDON HALL.

From Rev. G. P. Mathews,
Pastor Court Street Baptist Church, Auburn, Me.
Second Commendation.

Having carefully examined the "Young People's Bible History," I am prepared to give it my hearty recommendation as one of the *rare* books of the day. As a species of compendium of Biblical History, it is the *best* book I ever read. The simplicity, clearness, and dignity of its style, the freshness with which the facts and lessons of the Bible are presented, its spirit of catholicity and sincere faithfulness, its beautiful illustrations and almost faultless type, give it a special adaptedness for religious reading and for awakening in the minds of all a new interest in the study of the Bible.

G. P. MATHEWS.

From Rev. Fales Henry Newhall, D.D.,
Pastor South Common Street, M. E. Church, Lynn, Mass.

I have for some time used the "Young People's Bible History" in my family, and regard it as the *BEST* work of the kind that I have ever met.

FALES HENRY NEWHALL.

From Rev. Geo. C. Pennell,
Clinton Co., Associate Mission Diocese of Albany, St. John Rectory, N.Y.

As far as I have examined the "Young People's Bible History," I am *much pleased* with it. I think it is a useful book for Sabbath-school teachers. The tables afford much information that would require much time to collect. It also affords a book of instruction, and, at the same time, of recreation to children on Sundays.

GEO. C. PENNELL.

From W. A. Stearns, LL.D., D.D.,
President Amherst College, Amherst, Mass.
I have spent a few moments in looking over the book entitled the "Young People's Bible History;" and from its appearance, and my knowledge of the editor, I presume it is an excellent volume for the purposes intended.

W. A. STEARNS.

From Rev. L. P. Hickok, D.D.,
Amherst, Mass.
I know Dr. Bond well, and am sure his work is excellent and desirable.

L. P. HICKOK.

From Rev. E. Mills,
Pastor Baptist Church, Rutland, Vt.
This certifies, that while I would not indiscriminately or carelessly recommend subscription books, but, on the other hand, would caution the public in regard to them; yet, having a copy of the "Young People's Bible History" in my house for months, I can speak of it as an EXCELLENT and interesting book to place in the hands of children and youth; and, indeed, for parents and Sabbath-school teachers, as it tells in a familiar way the personal history of the Bible, which we all do or ought to love as the best of books.

E. MILLS.

From Rev. J. W. Alderman,
Pastor M. E. Church, Glen's Falls, N.Y.
After an examination of the "Young People's Bible History," I have no hesitancy in pronouncing it the best work of the kind I have ever examined. I hope all the families of our church will place a copy of the work in their libraries. It will be found attractive alike to the old as well as the young, and will be an invaluable aid to parents and Sabbath-school teachers in instructing and interesting the children. It is but seldom that I find a work of which I am willing to give a written recommendation, but this is MOST CHEERFULLY done.

J. W. ALDERMAN.

From Rev. D. Brough,
Pastor M. E. Church, Warrensburgh, N.Y.
From what I have seen of the "Young People's Bible History," I pronounce it a useful book for not only the young, but for all classes.

D. BROUGH.

From E. A. Smith, M.D.,
Chirvroyant Physician, Brandon, Vt.
This is to certify that I have very carefully examined the "Young People's Bible History," and cheerfully add my name to the many testimonials in its favor.

I consider it a work of great interest to both old and young, and one that should be in every family. I heartily recommend it to all.

E. A. SMITH, *Spiritualist*.

From Rev. Wm. H. Savory,
Pastor Unitarian Church, Ellsworth, Me.
I am glad to record my good impression of the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History," so far as I have examined contents. It seems to me to be a very useful and valuable work for teachers in our Sunday schools as well as for home use. I do not hesitate to cheerfully recommend the book.

WM. H. SAVORY.

From Rev. A. Judson Allen,
Pastor Baptist Church, Ticonderoga, N.Y.
To whom it may concern. This certifies that I have examined the entire copy of the "Young People's Illustrated Bible History," and I regard it a valuable help in the study of the sacred scriptures, and commend it to Sabbath-school teachers, scholars, and general readers.

A. JUDSON ALLEN.

From Rev. A. J. Fennel,
Pastor Presbyterian Church, Glens Falls, N.Y.
This is to certify that I have examined the "Young People's Bible History," and I deem it well adapted to be interesting and instructive to all readers. Its simple language and accurate statements of Bible events render it an excellent book for young persons.

I most cheerfully recommend it as a good family book.

A. J. FENNEL.

From Rev. E. R. Sawyer,
Pastor Baptist Church, Sandy Hill, N.Y.
I cheerfully concur with the opinion expressed above.

E. R. SAWYER.

From Rev. C. H. Nash,
Pastor Baptist Church, Glens Falls, N.Y.
I heartily recommend the "Young People's Bible History," as a family book and as a work especially adapted to the young. While serving for a commentary, it also presents the events of the Bible in a continuous history, a help to those who seek explanation, and by its style inviting to all who have a taste for reading.

C. H. NASH.

From Rev. James Lamb,
Pastor Presbyterian Church, Caldwell, Warren Co., N.Y.

I have examined with considerable care the "Young People's Bible History," and heartily recommend it as a work of great value. It is intended specially for the young, but will also interest and instruct those of maturer years. I hope it may have a place in every family.

JAMES LAMB.

From Rev. E. E. Curtis,
Pastor Wesleyan Methodist Church, Hagen, Warren Co., N.Y.

A copy of the "Young People's Bible History" having been put into my hands by E. G. Ruggles, I have given it a brief examination, and can cheerfully recommend it to all Bible students, and especially the young, as a concise, interesting, and valuable book. The chronological table contains a store of knowledge that would require much earnest study to obtain elsewhere.

E. E. CURTIS.

From Rev. William Schouler, Jun.,
Rector St. Thomas's Church, Brandon, Vt.

From a brief examination of the work entitled "Young People's Bible History," I think I can safely recommend it as interesting and useful, and a work which, it may be hoped, will lead to a fuller study of the Holy Scriptures,—one that will be of interest and service to both old and young, though designed especially for the latter class of readers.

WILLIAM SCHOULER, JR.

From Rev. John Wallace,
Pastor M. E. Church, Morristown, Vt.
"The Young People's Illustrated Bible History" is a book well worthy of a place in the library of every family, and is particularly instructive to the young.

Parents, buy it.

JOHN WALLACE.

From Rev. H. H. Neill,
Fort Edward, N.Y.

The name of Dr. Bond is in itself sufficient recommendation for any book which appears from his hand. All the examination I have been able to give the "Young People's Bible History" assures me that it is well calculated to increase the study of and interest in the Bible on the part of the young. A book which can accomplish this is of great value to any person.

H. H. NEILL.

JUST PUBLISHED,

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

OF

THE HOLY BIBLE,

BEING A CONNECTED ACCOUNT OF THE REMARKABLE EVENTS AND DISTINGUISHED CHARACTERS CONTAINED IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS, AND IN JEWISH HISTORY DURING THE FOUR HUNDRED YEARS INTERVENING BETWEEN THE TIME OF MALACHI AND THE BIRTH OF CHRIST, INCLUDING ALSO THE LIFE OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES; THE WHOLE EMBRACING A PERIOD OF FOUR THOUSAND YEARS; WITH NOTES CRITICAL, TOPOGRAPHICAL, AND EXPLANATORY; TOGETHER WITH CHRONOLOGICAL AND OTHER VALUABLE TABLES.

By JOHN KITTO,

Doctor of Divinity and Fellow of the Society of Arts, author of "Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature," "History of Palestine," &c.

Edited by ALVAN BOND, D.D.,

Formerly Professor of Biblical Literature in the Theological Seminary at Bangor, Me., and for 20 years Pastor of the Congregational Church, Norwich, Conn.

Complete in one Royal Octavo Volume of over 700 pages, embellished and illustrated by over 100 full-page engravings and colored maps, with extensive Chronological and other important Tables.

The Publisher is confident that this work will be regarded by intelligent readers, and especially by the lovers of Sacred Literature, as one of great interest and value. It presents, in a clear and beautiful style, a continuous history of the events embraced in the Sacred Record, describing the manners, customs, and religions that prevailed in the different periods; narrating the numerous conflicts that marked the progress and decline of nations, and furnishing biographical sketches of the individuals whose names are inscribed on the rolls of virtue and fame. This volume comprises an amount of varied and useful information that cost the author much labor and research, and which could be obtained from the original sources only at great expense. It is confidently commended as a book for the family circle, and especially for those engaged in the work of Christian instruction.

The name of the Rev. ALVAN BOND, D.D., by whom the work is edited, and who is well known as an accurate and accomplished Christian Scholar, is a sufficient guaranty that it is one of real interest and merit.

The numerous Engravings and Colored Maps that are found in the volume not only add to its beauty and attractiveness as embellishments, but illustrate, more accurately than words, the ancient customs and scenes which they represent.

This work is approved and commended by all denominations of Christians. The success of Agents who have commenced to canvass for it, has exceeded the Publisher's most sanguine expectations, and experienced agents say they never knew a book to sell so well. Some of the Agents are selling from twenty to forty copies in a day. Over One Thousand copies have been sold in Norwich, Conn., where the Editor resides. This great success of Agents has so encouraged the Publisher that he has put to press, on the finest paper, over \$400,000 worth of this work, to be immediately followed by other editions.

These large editions require nearly one hundred and fifty tons of paper, and require six months to print it on five large power-presses.

This great work we design to place beside the Bible in every family in the land.

For an Agency for this book, application should be made immediately, as the territory is being rapidly engaged. For further information, apply to the publisher, naming townships preferred in the order of your preference.

THE HENRY BILL PUBLISHING CO.,
NORWICH, CONN.

RECOMMENDATIONS

OF

Kitto's Illustrated History of the Bible.

From Rev. Leonard Bacon, D.D.

Any book in explanation of the Bible, from the learned Dr. Kitto, must be valuable. The Rev. Dr. Bond, I cannot doubt, will add to the value of Kitto's "History of the Bible," in the proposed American edition.

LEONARD BACON.

New Haven.

From Rev. Theo. L. Cuyler, D.D.

I so much approve of this "Illustrated History of the Holy Bible," that I wish it might be laid beside the Blessed Book of which it treats, in thousands of dwelling.

THEO. L. CUYLER,

Pastor Lafayette Avenue Church,
Brooklyn, N.Y.

From Rev. John P. Gulliver, D.D.

Kitto's "Illustrated History of the Bible" appears to be a narration of the facts recorded in the Scriptures, with the addition of a brief history of events down to the destruction of Jerusalem, written in a simple and attractive style, and free from the minuteness of detail which often renders more recondite works unfit for popular use. It seems specially adapted to the wants of Sabbath schools and Bible classes. The names of the author and editor furnish an ample guaranty of the trustworthiness of the work.

JOHN P. GULLIVER,

Pastor of New-England Church, Chicago.

From Rev. M. Emory Wright.

"The Illustrated History of the Holy Bible" has already been of great service to me in my studies of the Holy Scriptures. It presents the narrative portion of the divine word in a simple and easy, yet highly fascinating style, besides interweaving many historical facts and explanations, which throw great light upon the meaning of the sacred text.

M. EMORY WRIGHT,

Pastor 1st Methodist Episcopal Church,
Newburyport, Mass.

From Rev. G. H. Gould.

No modern writer has contributed more largely to enrich the biblical literature of our time, or to clothe with a fresh and living interest the main personages and incidents in Old Testament history, than John Kitto. The present volume—"History of the Bible"—bears all the marks of his wide learning, patient and accurate scholarship, fervent piety, and graceful and popular style. The book is amply and finely illustrated, and edited by a competent American scholar, Rev. Alván Bond, D.D., of Norwich. It deserves a wide circulation among all who love and prize the Bible.

G. H. GOULD,

Pastor 1st Cong. Church, Hartford, Conn.

From Rev. Benjamin Adams.

I have examined "The Illustrated History of the Bible" with great pleasure. In my opinion it is a book well qualified to do good, especially among the young and those who have not time for more careful and lengthy study of the great works on the Bible. Yours,

BENJAMIN ADAMS,

Pastor of Fleet Street M. E. Church,
Brooklyn, N.Y.

From Rev. G. E. Thrall.

Dr. Kitto being widely known as a learned and judicious historian of the Scriptures, I can safely recommend his work upon the Bible to my people as a valuable aid in their studies of the sacred Word.

GEORGE E. THRALL,

Rector of the Church of the Messiah,
Clinton Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y.

From Rev. R. S. Storrs, D.D.

"The Illustrated History of the Bible," by Dr. Kitto, edited by Dr. Bond, contains a great amount of valuable matter in a small compass, and will be found, by those who study it, very helpful to a clear and large understanding of the scriptural narrative.

R. S. STORRS, JUN.

Brooklyn, N.Y.

**From Prof. Pond, and others, of
Bangor, Maine.**

The service which Dr. Kitto rendered to the world by his various writings explanatory and illustrative of the Scriptures, it is difficult to over-estimate. There can be no risk in saying that his "Illustrated History of the Bible" must be superior to any thing else of the kind within the same compass; and the name of the American editor is a sufficient guaranty that the work will not suffer in passing through his hands. The book will be a treasure in any family.

ENOCH POND, }
GEO. SHEPARD, } Professors
D. F. TALCOTT, } Theo. Sem.
J. R. HERRICK, }

Rev. A. K. P. SMALL, Rev. J. B. GOULD,
Rev. G. W. FIELD, Rev. D. GOODWIN, Rev.
S. L. B. CHASE, Rev. S. P. FAY, Rev. A.
BATTLES, Rev. B. A. CHASE.

The very high rank which John Kitto holds as a biblical student justifies in most heartily recommending his "History of the Bible," as a work of complete reliability, and of popular interest.

C. C. EVERETT,
Pastor Unitarian Church.

**From Rev. Robert Allyn, D.D.,
of Illinois.**

I have examined with considerable attention an "Illustrated History of the Holy Bible," by Dr. Kitto of England, published by Henry Bill of Norwich, Conn. It is a work of great research, fully equal to any other work by the same distinguished author, whose life has been devoted to the study and illustration of learning and literature. The work contains an historic and literary introduction, a connected account of the events recorded in the Bible, a narrative of the events occurring between the writing of the Old Testament and the New, and a life of Christ and his apostles. All these things are not only useful, but absolutely necessary for the information of ministers and Sunday-school officers and teachers. Indeed, every intelligent Christian, or reader of the Bible, ought to possess a copy of this book, to be kept on the shelf with the Word of God. The work has been carefully edited and revised by Dr. Alvan Bond of Norwich, Conn., whose accurate scholarship and extensive learning add a new value to the book. I can very cordially and conscientiously commend this "History of the Bible" to all who desire to know more of the oldest and best, and most original of all books.

ROBERT ALLYN,
President McKendree College.
McKendree College, Lebanon, St. Clair Co., Ill.

From Rev. Joel Hawes, D.D.

An admirable family and Sabbath-school book, and a fit companion for a minister's study. Deeply interesting and instructive in the subject of which it treats, and abounding in striking pictorial illustrations, it should be in every household, to assist parents in the study of the Bible, and also to teach the knowledge of it to their children. Sabbath-school teachers will find it an excellent help in preparing themselves to meet their classes in the most interesting and instructive manner; and all who desire to enrich their minds and hearts with the treasures of God's Word will find this volume of inestimable value to them.

J. HAWES.
Hartford.

**From Rev. Noah Porter, D.D.,
and others.**

Kitto is one of the best writers of our age on the Scriptures. I have no doubt that his "Illustrated History of the Bible" is an excellent book, and particularly desirable for Sabbath-school scholars or teachers.

NOAH PORTER.

I cordially subscribe to what has been written above. The book is one of great value for family reading and study of the Holy Scriptures.

L. L. PAINE.

From what I know of Kitto's works, I fully believe this will be a very valuable book. I especially recommend it to Sabbath-school teachers.

E. S. HART.

I consider Kitto's "Illustrated History of the Bible" a work that will be of permanent interest to all who love to study the Bible.

SAMUEL S. COWLES.

From Rev. D. Moore.

Dr. Kitto's "History of the Bible" is an excellent work, well stored with useful information on the best of all subjects, and must prove a valuable aid to a proper understanding of the divine word. It will be found especially helpful in elucidating the historic portions of the Bible, and will well repay a careful perusal.

D. MOORE,

Pastor Washington Ave. Baptist Church,
Brooklyn, N.Y.

From Rev. H. M. Storrs, D.D.

With so much of considerate commendation from the highest sources spread before the eye, upon the fly-leaves of this volume, it hardly seems desirable that I should add any thing; and yet I am gratified in being permitted to encourage the circulation of a work containing so much of the best, in so small compass. Dr. Kitto's writings throughout are an endless pleasure and profit. Here he has brought together in biblical service the richest gains of his studious life.

H. M. STORRS.

Brooklyn, N.Y.

From Rev. S. D. Phelps, D.D.

From what I know of the writings of Dr. Kitto, and from the specimens of "The History of the Bible" which I have seen, I am sure it will be a work of great interest and value. The editorial labors of the Rev. Dr. Bond, together with its many excellent and life-like illustrations, cannot fail to largely increase the interest and value of the work. I cheerfully commend it.

S. D. PHELPS.

New Haven.

**From Rev. Edgar F. Clark of
Norwich.**

Kitto the author, is the best recommendation, and the only one needed. It cannot fail to add a charm to the Sacred Oracles, and fit it eminently for home reading. As far as it is known, the work has had and is having an extensive sale, far exceeding the most sanguine expectations of the publisher.

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